

Percy Bysshe Shelley

- poems -

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Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Shelley, born the heir to rich estates and the son of an Member of Parliament, went to University College, Oxford in 1810, but in March of the following year he and a friend, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, were both expelled for the suspected authorship of a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*.

In 1811 he met and eloped to Edinburgh with Harriet Westbrook and, one year later, went with her and her older sister first to Dublin, then to Devon and North Wales, where they stayed for six months into 1813. However, by 1814, and with the birth of two children, their marriage had collapsed and Shelley eloped once again, this time with Mary Godwin.

Along with Mary's step-sister, the couple travelled to France, Switzerland and Germany before returning to London where he took a house with Mary on the edge of Great Windsor Park and wrote *Alastor* (1816), the poem that first brought him fame.

In 1816 Shelley spent the summer on Lake Geneva with Byron and Mary who had begun work on her *Frankenstein*. In the autumn of that year Harriet drowned herself in the Serpentine in Hyde Park and Shelley then married Mary and settled with her, in 1817, at Great Marlow, on the Thames. They later travelled to Italy, where Shelley wrote the sonnet *Ozymandias* (written 1818) and translated Plato's *Symposium* from the Greek. Shelley himself drowned in a sailing accident in 1822.

A Lament

O World! O Life! O Time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more -Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight:
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more -Oh, never more!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Summer Evening Churchyard, Lechlade, Gloucestershire

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray,
And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of Day:
Silence and Twilight, unbeloved of men,
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea;
Light, sound, and motion, own the potent sway,
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, aerial pile, whose pinnacles
Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
Obey'st I in silence their sweet solemn spells,
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
Around whose lessening and invisible height
Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres:
And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound,
Half sense half thought, among the darkness stirs,
Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around,
And, mingling with the still night and mute sky,
Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
And terrorless as this serenest night.
Here could I hope, like some enquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Widow Bird Sate Mourning For Her Love

A widow bird sate mourning for her Love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Adonais

I weep for Adonais -he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: "With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!"

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

O, weep for Adonais -he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend; -oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania! -He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished -
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,

Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies -the storm is overpast.

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal. -Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

He will awake no more, oh, never more! -
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

O, weep for Adonais! -The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not, -
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries,
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,

Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music: the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

And others came... Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp; -the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds: -a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both

Thou, Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Season's bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning? -the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,

Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Our of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

Our of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and Life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
Leave me not!" cried Urania: her distress
Roused Death: Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

"Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion; -how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smiled! -The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

Thus ceased she: and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Irene sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his tongue.

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift -
A Love in desolation masked; -a Power

Girt round with weakness; -it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow; -even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: "Who art thou?"
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's -oh! that it should be so!

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

Our Adonais has drunk poison -oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!

And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt -as now.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now -
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep -
He hath awakened from the dream of life -
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. -We decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He lives, he wakes -'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais. -Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move

Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heavens' light.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, -his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprov'd.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"

Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink

When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend, -they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

Go thou to Rome, -at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments. -Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled! -Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, -the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats

I weep for Adonais--he is dead!
Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: "With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!"

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierc'd by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamour'd breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorn'd and hid the coming bulk of Death.

Oh, weep for Adonais--he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend--oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania! He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave and the liberticide,
Trampled and mock'd with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dar'd to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perish'd; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perish'd,
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,

Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherish'd,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipp'd before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies--the storm is overpast.

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.--Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

Oh, weep for Adonais! The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not--
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries,
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosen'd from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruin'd Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Wash'd his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipp'd her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,

Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music: the damp death
Quench'd its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flush'd through his pale limbs, and pass'd to its eclipse.

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veil'd Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp; the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

All he had lov'd, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimm'd the aëreal eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moan'd,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remember'd lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perch'd on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pin'd away
Into a shadow of all sounds: a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have wak'd the sullen year?
To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both

Thou, Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turn'd to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierc'd thy innocent breast,
And scar'd the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprison'd flames, out of their trance awake.

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawn'd on Chaos; in its stream immers'd,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

The leprous corpse, touch'd by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is chang'd to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consum'd before the sheath
By sightless lightning?--the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quench'd in a most cold repose.

Alas! that all we lov'd of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet mass'd in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,

Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his, with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watch'd Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so rous'd, so rapt Urania;
So sadden'd round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Pav'd with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Sham'd by the presence of that living Might,
Blush'd to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and Life's pale light
Flash'd through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
Leave me not!" cried Urania: her distress
Rous'd Death: Death rose and smil'd, and met her vain caress.

"Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chain'd to Time, and cannot thence depart!

"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastur'd dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirror'd shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have fill'd its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion; how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smil'd! The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gather'd into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimm'd or shar'd its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

Thus ceas'd she: and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his tongue.

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gaz'd on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursu'd, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift--
A Love in desolation mask'd--a Power

Girt round with weakness--it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow; even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topp'd with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasp'd it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandon'd deer struck by the hunter's dart.

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smil'd through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scann'd
The Stranger's mien, and murmur'd: "Who art thou?"
He answer'd not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguin'd brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's--oh! that it should be so!

What softer voice is hush'd over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, sooth'd, lov'd, honour'd the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

Our Adonais has drunk poison--oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remember'd name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!

And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow;
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt--as now.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep,
He hath awaken'd from the dream of life;
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. We decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

He has outsoar'd the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceas'd to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He lives, he wakes--'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais. Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandon'd Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move

Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclips'd, but are extinguish'd not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

The inheritors of unfulfill'd renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he liv'd and lov'd
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approv'd:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprov'd.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, rob'd in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid a Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"

Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink

When hope has kindled hope, and lur'd thee to the brink.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend--they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gather'd to the kings of thought
Who wag'd contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

Go thou to Rome--at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shatter'd mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilions the dust of him who plann'd
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transform'd to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitch'd in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguish'd breath.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consign'd
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-colour'd glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.--Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!--Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is pass'd from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invok'd in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Alastor: or, the Spirit of Solitude

Earth, Ocean, Air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If Autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And Winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the gray grass and bare boughs;
If Spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses,--have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred; then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favor now!

Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favor my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears,
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge; and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb

No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:
A lovely youth,--no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:
Gentle, and brave, and generous,--no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sung in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves,
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous band his bloodless food,

Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange,
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk
Or jasper tomb or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble daemons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth: through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes; nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps,
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love, and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose; then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet, wandering on, through Arabie,
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep

There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-colored woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire; wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos; her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burden; at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs, and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom:--she drew back awhile,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance--
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes

Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, forever lost
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault with loathliest vapors hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart;
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness. As an eagle, grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide æry wilderness: thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair,
Sere by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand

Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone,
As in a furnace burning secretly,
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of Wind,
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career; the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after times; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasman shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and, with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight:--'Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?' A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.

It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny; sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat; he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat. A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate,
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on;
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of Day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean; safely fled--
As if that frail and wasted human form

Had been an elemental god.

At midnight

The moon arose; and lo! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound forever.--Who shall save?--
The boat fled on,--the boiling torrent drove,--
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed.--'Vision and Love!'
The Poet cried aloud, 'I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long.'

The boat pursued

The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. In the midst was left,
Reflecting yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round and round and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.--Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
Now shall it fall?--A wandering stream of wind
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,

And, lo! with gentle motion between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails, and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
Forever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which naught but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry; it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their aëry rocks,
Mocking its moans, respond and roar forever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as, led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt some bank,
Her cradle and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The gray trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs,
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make network of the dark blue light of day
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns

Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose twined with jasmine
A soul-dissolving odor to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half-seen; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star,
Between one foliated lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves--the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence--and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him--clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;
But undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was; only--when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness--two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell. The rivulet,
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony

Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced, like childhood laughing as it went;
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.--'O stream!
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course,
Have each their type in me; and the wide sky
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind!

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move; yet not like him
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Gray rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook; tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs:--so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,

'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems with its accumulated crags
To overhang the world; for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-colored even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl,
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the gray precipice and solemn pine
And torrent were not all;--one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves forever green
And berries dark the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor; and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore
In wanton sport those bright leaves whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'T is the haunt
Of every gentle wind whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude; one voice
Alone inspired its echoes;--even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,

Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colors of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness; not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.--O storm of death,
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night!
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world! from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee! Ruin calls
His brother Death! A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine; upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head; his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm;--and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and Despair,
The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose; the influxes of sense
And his own being, unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling. His last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed

To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests; and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With Nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still;
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night:--till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused--it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapor fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame--
No sense, no motion, no divinity--
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander--a bright stream
Once fed with many-voicèd waves--a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched forever--
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

Oh, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! Oh, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders forever,
Lone as incarnate death! Oh, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled,
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,--ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:--but thou art fled--
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not! Upon those pallid lips

So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed--not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe "too deep for tears," when all
Is left at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

An Exhortation

Chameleons feed on light and air:
Poets' food is love and fame:
If in this wide world of care
Poets could but find the same
With as little toil as they,
Would they ever change their hue
As the light chameleons do,
Suiting it to every ray
Twenty times a day?

Poets are on this cold earth,
As chameleons might be,
Hidden from their early birth
In a cave beneath the sea;
Where light is, chameleons change:
Where love is not, poets do:
Fame is love disguised: if few
Find either, never think it strange
That poets range.

Yet dare not stain with wealth or power
A poet's free and heavenly mind:
If bright chameleons should devour
Any food but beams and wind,
They would grow as earthly soon
As their brother lizards are.
Children of a sunnier star,
Spirits from beyond the moon,
O, refuse the boon!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

And like a Dying Lady, Lean and Pale

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapp'd in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky East,

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Percy Bysshe Shelley

Archy's Song from Charles the First

Heigho! the lark and the owl!
One flies the morning, and one lulls the night:
Only the nightingale, poor fond soul,
Sings like the fool through darkness and light.

"A widow bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

"There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound."

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Art Thou Pale For Weariness

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Asia: From Prometheus Unbound

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnacle glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have past Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Autumn: A Dirge

The warm sun is falling, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
 And the Year
On the earth is her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
 Is lying.
 Come, Months, come away,
 From November to May,
 In your saddest array;
 Follow the bier
 Of the dead cold Year,
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

The chill rain is falling, the nipped worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
 For the Year;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone
 To his dwelling.
 Come, Months, come away;
 Put on white, black and gray;
 Let your light sisters play--
 Ye, follow the bier
 Of the dead cold Year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Bereavement

How stern are the woes of the desolate mourner
As he bends in still grief o'er the hallowed bier,
As enanguished he turns from the laugh of the scorner,
And drops to perfection's remembrance a tear;
When floods of despair down his pale cheeks are streaming,
When no blissful hope on his bosom is beaming,
Or, if lulled for a while, soon he starts from his dreaming,
And finds torn the soft ties to affection so dear.
Ah, when shall day dawn on the night of the grave,
Or summer succeed to the winter of death?
Rest awhile, hapless victim! and Heaven will save
The spirit that hath faded away with the breath.
Eternity points, in its amaranth bower
Where no clouds of fate o'er the sweet prospect lour,
Unspeakable pleasure, of goodness the dower,
When woe fades away like the mist of the heath.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Chorus from Hellas

The world`s great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faith and empires gleam,
Like a wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulyssses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

England in 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,--
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,--mud from a muddy spring,--
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,--
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,--
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield,--
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless--a book sealed;
A Senate,--Time's worst statute unrepealed,--
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

English In 1819

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Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epipsychidion (excerpt)

Emily,
A ship is floating in the harbour now,
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,
No keel has ever plough'd that path before;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles;
The treacherous Ocean has forsworn its wiles;
The merry mariners are bold and free:
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me?
Our bark is as an albatross, whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple East;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night,
And Day, and Storm, and Calm, pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless Sea,
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remain'd a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited; innocent and bold.
The blue Aegean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide:
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air; and far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noonday nightingales;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs;
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within the soul--they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.
It is an isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth and Sea,
Cradled and hung in clear tranquillity;

Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
 Wash'd by the soft blue Oceans of young air.
 It is a favour'd place. Famine or Blight,
 Pestilence, War and Earthquake, never light
 Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
 Sail onward far upon their fatal way:
 The wing'd storms, chanting their thunder-psalm
 To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
 Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
 From which its fields and woods ever renew
 Their green and golden immortality.
 And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
 There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
 Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
 Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside,
 Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
 Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
 Blushes and trembles at its own excess:
 Yet, like a buried lamp, a Soul no less
 Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
 An atom of th' Eternal, whose own smile
 Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen
 O'er the gray rocks, blue waves and forests green,
 Filling their bare and void interstices.
 But the chief marvel of the wilderness
 Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
 None of the rustic island-people know:
 'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
 It overtops the woods; but, for delight,
 Some wise and tender Ocean-King, ere crime
 Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
 Rear'd it, a wonder of that simple time,
 An envy of the isles, a pleasure-house
 Made sacred to his sister and his spouse.
 It scarce seems now a wreck of human art,
 But, as it were, Titanic; in the heart
 Of Earth having assum'd its form, then grown
 Out of the mountains, from the living stone,
 Lifting itself in caverns light and high:
 For all the antique and learned imagery
 Has been eras'd, and in the place of it
 The ivy and the wild-vine interknit
 The volumes of their many-twining stems;
 Parasite flowers illumine with dewy gems
 The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
 Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
 With moonlight patches, or star atoms keen,
 Or fragments of the day's intense serene;
 Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
 And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
 And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
 To sleep in one another's arms, and dream

Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
Read in their smiles, and call reality.

This isle and house are mine, and I have vow'd
Thee to be lady of the solitude.
And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden Eastern air,
And level with the living winds, which flow
Like waves above the living waves below.
I have sent books and music there, and all
Those instruments with which high Spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.
Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste
The scene it would adorn, and therefore still,
Nature with all her children haunts the hill.
The ring-dove, in the embowering ivy, yet
Keeps up her love-lament, and the owls flit
Round the evening tower, and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moonlight
Before our gate, and the slow, silent night
Is measur'd by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life, and when years heap
Their wither'd hours, like leaves, on our decay,
Let us become the overhanging day,
The living soul of this Elysian isle,
Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise, and sit, and walk together,
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather,
And wander in the meadows, or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds, to touch their paramour;
Or linger, where the pebble-paven shore,
Under the quick, faint kisses of the sea,
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy--
Possessing and possess'd by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one: or, at the noontide hour, arrive
Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
The moonlight of the expir'd night asleep,
Through which the awaken'd day can never peep;
A veil for our seclusion, close as night's,
Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights;
Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
And we will talk, until thought's melody
Become too sweet for utterance, and it die

In words, to live again in looks, which dart
With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
Harmonizing silence without a sound.
Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
And our veins beat together; and our lips
With other eloquence than words, eclipse
The soul that burns between them, and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confus'd in Passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigur'd; ever still
Burning, yet ever unconsumable:
In one another's substance finding food,
Like flames too pure and light and unimbu'd
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away:
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation. Woe is me!
The winged words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of Love's rare Universe,
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire--
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Feelings Of A Republican On The Fall Of Bonaparte

I hated thee, fallen tyrant! I did groan
To think that a most unambitious slave,
Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the grave
Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy throne
Where it had stood even now: thou didst prefer
A frail and bloody pomp which Time has swept
In fragments towards Oblivion. Massacre,
For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have crept,
Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,
And stifled thee, their minister. I know
Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
That Virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than Force or Fraud: old Custom, legal Crime,
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of Time.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

fragment: "To the Moon"

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing Heaven, and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,--
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

fragment: To The Moon

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing Heaven, and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,--
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From "Adonais," 49-52

49

Go thou to Rome,--at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

50

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

51

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

52

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.--Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!--Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From the Arabic, an Imitation

MY faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb, whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight,
Bore thee far from me;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.

Ah! fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care;
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Good-Night

Good-night? ah! no; the hour is ill
Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,
Then it will be good night.

How can I call the lone night good,
Though thy sweet wishes wing its flight?
Be it not said, thought, understood --
Then it will be -- good night.

To hearts which near each other move
From evening close to morning light,
The night is good; because, my love,
They never say good-night.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Hellas

THE world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn;
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star;
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies;
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

O write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be--
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free,
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if naught so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

O cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy!
The world is weary of the past--
O might it die or rest at last!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Hymn Of Pan

FROM the forests and highlands
 We come, we come;
 From the river-girt islands,
 Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.
 The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
 The bees on the bells of thyme,
 The birds on the myrtle-bushes,
 The cicale above in the lime,
 And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was,
Listening to my sweet pipings.

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
 And all dark Temple lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
 The light of the dying day,
Speeded by my sweet pipings.
 The Sileni and Sylvans and fauns,
 And the Nymphs of the woods and wave
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
 And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow,
Were silent with love,--as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

I sang of the dancing stars,
 I sang of the dedal earth,
And of heaven, and the Giant wars,
 And love, and death, and birth.
And then I changed my pipings,--
Singing how down the vale of Maenalus
 I pursued a maiden, and clasped a reed:
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus;
 It breaks in our bosom, and then we bleed.
All wept--as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood--
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats through unseen among us, -- visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower, --
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening, --
Like clouds in starlight widely spread, --
Like memory of music fled, --
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, -- where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom, -- why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given --
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
Frail spells -- whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone -- like mist o'er the mountains driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes --
Thou -- that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came,
Depart not -- lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
I was not heard -- I saw them not --
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming, --
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine -- have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night --
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou - O awful Loveliness,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past -- there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm -- to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I Arise from Dreams of Thee

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me -- who knows how? --
To thy chamber-window, sweet!

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream, --
The champak odors fall
Like sweet thoughts in a dream,
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must die on thine,
O, beloved as thou art!

O, lift me from the grass!
I die, I faint, I fall!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale,
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My Heart beats loud and fast
Oh! press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Invocation

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure;
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure; -
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

I love snow and all the forms
Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Everything almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise, and good: -
Between thee and me
What diff'rence? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love -though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,

Spirit, I love thee -
Thou art love and life! O come!
Make once more my heart thy home!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Julian and Maddalo (excerpt)

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice: a bare strand
Of hillocks, heap'd from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,
Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons; and no other object breaks
The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes
Broken and unrepair'd, and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon,
Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows; and yet more
Than all, with a remember'd friend I love
To ride as then I rode; for the winds drove
The living spray along the sunny air
Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripp'd to their depths by the awakening north;
And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts a real merriment.
So, as we rode, we talk'd; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, linger'd not,
But flew from brain to brain--such glee was ours,
Charg'd with light memories of remember'd hours,
None slow enough for sadness: till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold, and now
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish: 'twas forlorn,
Yet pleasing, such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales of Hell
Concerning God, freewill and destiny:
Of all that earth has been or yet may be,
All that vain men imagine or believe,
Or hope can paint or suffering may achieve,
We descanted, and I (for ever still
Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)
Argu'd against despondency, but pride
Made my companion take the darker side.
The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.

Meanwhile the sun paus'd ere it should alight,
 Over the horizon of the mountains--Oh,
 How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
 Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,
 Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!
 Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
 Of cities they encircle! It was ours
 To stand on thee, beholding it: and then,
 Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
 Were waiting for us with the gondola.
 As those who pause on some delightful way
 Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
 Looking upon the evening, and the flood
 Which lay between the city and the shore,
 Pav'd with the image of the sky.... The hoar
 And æmly Alps towards the North appear'd
 Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark rear'd
 Between the East and West; and half the sky
 Was roof'd with clouds of rich emblazonry
 Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
 Down the steep West into a wondrous hue
 Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
 Where the swift sun yet paus'd in his descent
 Among the many-folded hills: they were
 Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
 As seen from Lido thro' the harbour piles,
 The likeness of a clump of peak`d isles--
 And then--as if the Earth and Sea had been
 Dissolv'd into one lake of fire, were seen
 Those mountains towering as from waves of flame
 Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
 The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
 Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"
 Said my companion, "I will show you soon
 A better station"--so, o'er the lagune
 We glided; and from that funereal bark
 I lean'd, and saw the city, and could mark
 How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
 Its temples and its palaces did seem
 Like fabrics of enchantment pil'd to Heaven.
 I was about to speak, when--"We are even
 Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,
 And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
 "Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
 If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."
 I look'd, and saw between us and the sun
 A building on an island; such a one
 As age to age might add, for uses vile,
 A windowless, deform'd and dreary pile;
 And on the top an open tower, where hung
 A bell, which in the radiance sway'd and swung;
 We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue:

The broad sun sunk behind it, and it toll'd
In strong and black relief. "What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,"
Said Maddalo, "and ever at this hour
Those who may cross the water, hear that bell
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers." "As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
To their stern Maker," I replied. "O ho!
You talk as in years past," said Maddalo.
" 'Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs--if you can't swim
Beware of Providence." I look'd on him,
But the gay smile had faded in his eye.
"And such," he cried, "is our mortality,
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine!
And like that black and dreary bell, the soul,
Hung in a heaven-illumin'd tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart and pray--as madmen do
For what? they know not--till the night of death,
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought and yet were baffled." I recall
The sense of what he said, although I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill,
And the black bell became invisible,
And the red tower look'd gray, and all between
The churches, ships and palaces were seen
Huddled in gloom;--into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Convey'd me to my lodgings by the way.

The following morn was rainy, cold and dim:
Ere Maddalo arose, I call'd on him,
And whilst I waited with his child I play'd;
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made,
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being,
Graceful without design and unforeseeing,
With eyes--Oh speak not of her eyes!--which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam
With such deep meaning, as we never see
But in the human countenance: with me
She was a special favourite: I had nurs'd
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world; and she yet seem'd to know
On second sight her ancient playfellow,
Less chang'd than she was by six months or so;

For after her first shyness was worn out
 We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,
 When the Count enter'd. Salutations past--
 "The word you spoke last night might well have cast
 A darkness on my spirit--if man be
 The passive thing you say, I should not see
 Much harm in the religions and old saws
 (Though I may never own such leaden laws)
 Which break a teachless nature to the yoke:
 Mine is another faith"--thus much I spoke
 And noting he replied not, added: "See
 This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free;
 She spends a happy time with little care,
 While we to such sick thoughts subjected are
 As came on you last night. It is our will
 That thus enchains us to permitted ill.
 We might be otherwise. We might be all
 We dream of happy, high, majestic.
 Where is the love, beauty, and truth we seek
 But in our mind? and if we were not weak
 Should we be less in deed than in desire?"
 "Ay, if we were not weak--and we aspire
 How vainly to be strong!" said Maddalo:
 "You talk Utopia." "It remains to know,"
 I then rejoin'd, "and those who try may find
 How strong the chains are which our spirit bind;
 Brittle perchance as straw.... We are assur'd
 Much may be conquer'd, much may be endur'd,
 Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
 That we have power over ourselves to do
 And suffer--what, we know not till we try;
 But something nobler than to live and die:
 So taught those kings of old philosophy
 Who reign'd, before Religion made men blind;
 And those who suffer with their suffering kind
 Yet feel their faith, religion." "My dear friend,"
 Said Maddalo, "my judgement will not bend
 To your opinion, though I think you might
 Make such a system refutation-tight
 As far as words go. I knew one like you
 Who to this city came some months ago,
 With whom I argu'd in this sort, and he
 Is now gone mad--and so he answer'd me--
 Poor fellow! but if you would like to go
 We'll visit him, and his wild talk will show
 How vain are such aspiring theories."
 "I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
 And that a want of that true theory, still,
 Which seeks a 'soul of goodness' in things ill
 Or in himself or others, has thus bow'd
 His being. There are some by nature proud,
 Who patient in all else demand but this--

To love and be belov'd with gentleness;
And being scorn'd, what wonder if they die
Some living death? this is not destiny
But man's own wilful ill."

As thus I spoke
Servants announc'd the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sail'd to the island where the madhouse stands.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lift Not The Painted Veil Which Those Who Live

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread,--behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin Destinies; who ever weave
Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
I knew one who had lifted it--he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love,
But found them not, alas! nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines

WHEN the lamp is shatter'd,
The light in the dust lies dead;
When the cloud is scatter'd,
The rainbow's glory is shed;
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remember'd not
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute--
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruin'd cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possest.
O Love, who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

Its passions will rock thee,
As the storms rock the ravens on high:
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines Written Among The Euganean Hills

Many a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of Misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on -
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track:
Whilst above the sunless sky,
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
And behind the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,

He is ever drifted on
O'er the unreposing wave
To the haven of the grave.
What, if there no friends will greet;
What, if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat;
Wander wheresoe'er he may,
Can he dream before that day
To find refuge from distress
In friendship's smile, in love's caress?
Then 'twill wreak him little woe
Whether such there be or no:
Senseless is the breast, and cold,
Which relenting love would fold;
Bloodless are the veins and chill
Which the pulse of pain did fill;
Every little living nerve
That from bitter words did swerve
Round the tortured lips and brow,
Are like sapless leaflets now
Frozen upon December's bough.

On the beach of a northern sea
Which tempests shake eternally,
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
Lies a solitary heap,
One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few grey rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land:
Nor is heard one voice of wail
But the sea-mews, as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling, like a slaughtered town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp and fratricides:
Those unburied bones around
There is many a mournful sound;

There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,
Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony:
To such a one this morn was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted:
'Mid the mountains Euganean
I stood listening to the paean
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestic;
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow, down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair;
Underneath Day's azure eyes
Ocean's nursling, Venice, lies,
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies;
As the flames of sacrifice

From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sea-girt City, thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin than than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,
Save where many a palace gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of Ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way,
Wandering at the close of day,
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid masque of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through aerial gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murdered, and now mouldering:
But if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime;
If not, perish thou ldering:
But if Freedom should awake

In her omnipotence and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime;
If not, perish thou and they! -
Clouds which stain truth's rising day
By her sun consumed away -
Earth can spare ye; while like flowers,
In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.

Perish -let there only be
Floating o'er thy heartless sea
As the garment of thy sky
Clothes the world immortally,
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tattered pall of time,
Which scarce hides thy visage wan; -
That a tempest-cleaving Swan
Of the sons of Albion,
Driven from his ancestral streams
By the might of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee; and Ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew his, and sprung
From his lips like music flung
O'er a mighty thunder-fit,
Chastening terror: -what though yet
Poesy's unfailing River,
Which through Albion winds forever
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred Poet's grave,
Mourn its latest nursling fled?
What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce can for this fame repay
Aught thine own? oh, rather say
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul?
As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wasting springs;
As divinest Shakespeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power which he
Imaged 'mid mortality;
As the love from Petrarch's urn,
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,

A quenchless lamp by which the heart
Sees things unearthly; -so thou art,
Mighty spirit -so shall be
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky
Like thought-winged Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height;
From the sea a mist has spread,
And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that gray cloud
Many-domed Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude,
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,
Where the peasant heaps his grain
In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow
With the purple vintage strain,
Heaped upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will;
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region's foison,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction's harvest-home:
Men must reap the things they sow,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse; but 'tis a bitter woe
That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls
Those mute guests at festivals,
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
Played at dice for Ezzelin,
Till Death cried, "I win, I win!"
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,
But Death promised, to assuage her,
That he would petition for
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
When the destined years were o'er,
Over all between the Po
And the eastern Alpine snow,
Under the mighty Austrian.
She smiled so as Sin only can,
And since that time, ay, long before,
Both have ruled from shore to shore, -

That incestuous pair, who follow
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
As Repentance follows Crime,
And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,
Padua, now no more is burning;
Like a meteor, whose wild way
Is lost over the grave of day,
It gleams betrayed and to betray:
Once remotest nations came
To adore that sacred flame,
When it lit not many a hearth
On this cold and gloomy earth:
Now new fires from antique light
Spring beneath the wide world's might;
But their spark lies dead in thee,
Trampled out by Tyranny.
As the Norway woodman quells,
In the depth of piny dells,
One light flame among the brakes,
While the boundless forest shakes,
And its mighty trunks are torn
By the fire thus lowly born:
The spark beneath his feet is dead,
He starts to see the flames it fed
Howling through the darkened sky
With a myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear: so thou,
O Tyranny, beholdest now
Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fearest:
Grovel on the earth; ay, hide
In the dust thy purple pride!

Noon descends around me now:
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
When a soft and purple mist
Like a vapourous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolved star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of Heaven's profound,
Fills the overflowing sky;
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath the leaves unsodden
Where the infant Frost has trodden
With his morning-winged feet,
Whose bright print is gleaming yet;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellised lines
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness;

The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower
In the windless air; the flower
Glimmering at my feet; the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread
High between the clouds and sun;
And of living things each one;
And my spirit which so long
Darkened this swift stream of song, -
Interpenetrated lie
By the glory of the sky:
Be it love, light, harmony,
Odour, or the soul of all
Which from Heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star, which to her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs:
And the soft dreams of the morn
(Which like winged winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,
And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of Life and Agony:
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf: even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine:

We may live so happy there,
That the Spirits of the Air,
Envyng us, may even entice
To our healing Paradise
The polluting multitude;
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves;
While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies;
And the love which heals all strife
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood:
They, not it, would change; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines Written in the Bay of Lerici

She left me at the silent time
When the moon had ceas'd to climb
The azure path of Heaven's steep,
And like an albatross asleep,
Balanc'd on her wings of light,
Hover'd in the purple night,
Ere she sought her ocean nest
In the chambers of the West.
She left me, and I stay'd alone
Thinking over every tone
Which, though silent to the ear,
The enchanted heart could hear,
Like notes which die when born, but still
Haunt the echoes of the hill;
And feeling ever--oh, too much!--
The soft vibration of her touch,
As if her gentle hand, even now,
Lightly trembled on my brow;
And thus, although she absent were,
Memory gave me all of her
That even Fancy dares to claim:
Her presence had made weak and tame
All passions, and I lived alone
In the time which is our own;
The past and future were forgot,
As they had been, and would be, not.
But soon, the guardian angel gone,
The daemon reassum'd his throne
In my faint heart. I dare not speak
My thoughts, but thus disturb'd and weak
I sat and saw the vessels glide
Over the ocean bright and wide,
Like spirit-winged chariots sent
O'er some serenest element
For ministrations strange and far,
As if to some Elysian star
Sailed for drink to medicine
Such sweet and bitter pain as mine.
And the wind that wing'd their flight
From the land came fresh and light,
And the scent of winged flowers,
And the coolness of the hours
Of dew, and sweet warmth left by day,
Were scatter'd o'er the twinkling bay.
And the fisher with his lamp
And spear about the low rocks damp
Crept, and struck the fish which came
To worship the delusive flame.
Too happy they, whose pleasure sought
Extinguishes all sense and thought
Of the regret that pleasure leaves,
Destroying life alone, not peace!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines: The cold earth slept below

The cold earth slept below;
Above the cold sky shone;
And all around,
With a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.

The wintry hedge was black;
The green grass was not seen;
The birds did rest
On the bare thorn's breast,
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,
Had bound their folds o'er many a crack
Which the frost had made between.

Thine eyes glow'd in the glare
Of the moon's dying light;
As a fen-fire's beam
On a sluggish stream
Gleams dimly--so the moon shone there,
And it yellow'd the strings of thy tangled hair,
That shook in the wind of night.

The moon made thy lips pale, beloved;
The wind made thy bosom chill;
The night did shed
On thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Love's Philosophy

The fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean;
The winds of heaven mix forever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In another's being mingle--
Why not I with thine?

See, the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower could be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea;--
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Mont Blanc

<i>(Lines written in the Vale of Chamouni)</i>

1

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark - now glittering - now reflecting gloom -
Now lending splendor, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters, - with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, amon the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

2

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve - dark, deep Ravine-
Thou many-colored, many voiced vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning through the tempest; -thou dost lie,
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odors, and their mighty swinging
To hear - an old and solemn harmony;
Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep
Of the ethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptured image; the strange sleep
Which when the voices of the desert fail
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;-
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound-
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by

Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

3

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep,-that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live. -I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Spread far and round and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes amon the viewless gales!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears,-still snowy and serene-
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracks her there - how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven. -Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-demon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelop once this silent snow?
None can reply - all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for such faith, with nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

4

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the daedal earth; lightning, and rain,
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower; -the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap;

The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
 And that of him, and all that his may be;
 All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
 Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell.
 Power dwells apart in its tranquility,
 Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
 And this, the naked countenance of earth,
 On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains
 Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
 Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
 Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,
 Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
 Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
 A city of death, distinct with many a tower
 And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
 Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
 Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
 Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
 Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
 Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down
 From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
 The limits of the dead and living world,
 Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
 Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil
 Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
 So much of life and joy is lost. The race
 Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
 Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
 And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
 Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,
 Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
 Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
 The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
 Rolls its loud waters to the ocean-waves,
 Breathes its swift vapors to the circling air.

5

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:-the power is there,
 The still and solemn power of many sights,
 And many sounds, and much of life and death.
 In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
 In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
 Upon that mountain; none beholds them there,
 Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
 Or the star-beams dart through them:-Winds contend
 Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
 Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
 The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
 Keeps innocently, and like vapor broods
 Over the snow. The secret Strength of things
 Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome

Of Heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni

I

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark--now glittering--now reflecting gloom--
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters--with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume,
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve--dark, deep Ravine--
Thou many-colour'd, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning through the tempest;--thou dost lie,
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear--an old and solemn harmony;
Thine earthly rainbows stretch'd across the sweep
Of the aethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptur'd image; the strange sleep
Which when the voices of the desert fail
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound--
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

III

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
 Visit the soul in sleep, that death is slumber,
 And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
 Of those who wake and live.--I look on high;
 Has some unknown omnipotence unfurl'd
 The veil of life and death? or do I lie
 In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
 Spread far around and inaccessibly
 Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
 Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
 That vanishes among the viewless gales!
 Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
 Mont Blanc appears--still, snowy, and serene;
 Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
 Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
 Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
 Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
 And wind among the accumulated steeps;
 A desert peopled by the storms alone,
 Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
 And the wolf tracks her there--how hideously
 Its shapes are heap'd around! rude, bare, and high,
 Ghastly, and scarr'd, and riven.--Is this the scene
 Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
 Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
 Of fire envelop once this silent snow?
 None can reply--all seems eternal now.
 The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
 Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
 So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
 But for such faith, with Nature reconcil'd;
 Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
 Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
 By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
 Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

IV

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
 Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
 Within the daedal earth; lightning, and rain,
 Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
 The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
 Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
 Holds every future leaf and flower; the bound
 With which from that detested trance they leap;
 The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
 And that of him and all that his may be;
 All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
 Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell.
 Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
 Remote, serene, and inaccessible:

And this, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have pil'd: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destin'd path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shatter'd stand; the rocks, drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaim'd. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,
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Percy Bysshe Shelley

Music, When Soft Voices Die

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Mutability

We are the clouds that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly!--yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost forever:

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.--A dream has power to poison sleep;
We rise.--One wandering thought pollutes the day;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep;
Embrace fond foe, or cast our cares away:

It is the same!--For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free:
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but Mutability.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Night

SWIFTLY walk o'er the western wave,
 Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,--
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear
Which make thee terrible and dear,--
 Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
 Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out.
Then wander o'er city and sea and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand--
 Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
 I sigh'd for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turn'd to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
 I sigh'd for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
 'Wouldst thou me?'
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmur'd like a noontide bee,
'Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?'--And I replied,
 'No, not thee!'

Death will come when thou art dead,
 Soon, too soon--
Sleep will come when thou art fled.
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night--
Swift be thine approaching flight,
 Come soon, soon!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ode to the West Wind

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On A Dead Violet

The odor from the flower is gone
Which like thy kisses breathed on me;
The color from the flower is flown
Which glowed of thee and only thee!

A shrivelled, lifeless, vacant form,
It lies on my abandoned breast;
And mocks the heart, which yet is warm,
With cold and silent rest.

I weep--my tears revive it not;
I sigh--it breathes no more on me:
Its mute and uncomplaining lot
Is such as mine should be.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On Death

The pale, the cold, and the moony smile
Which the meteor beam of a starless night
Sheds on a lonely and sea-girt isle,
Ere the dawning of morn's undoubted light,
Is the flame of life so fickle and wan
That flits round our steps till their strength is gone.

O man! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy wordly way,
And the billows of clouds that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,
Where hell and heaven shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.

This world is the nurse of all we know,
This world is the mother of all we feel,
And the coming of death is a fearful blow
To a brain unencompass'd by nerves of steel:
When all that we know, or feel, or see,
Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

The secret things of the grave are there,
Where all but this frame must surely be,
Though the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear
No longer will live, to hear or to see
All that is great and all that is strange
In the boundless realm of unending change.

Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death?
Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?
Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?
Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
With the fears and the love for that which we see?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

One sung of thee who left the tale untold

One sung of thee who left the tale untold,
Like the false dawns which perish in the bursting;
Like empty cups of wrought and daedal gold,
Which mock the lips with air, when they are thirsting.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

One Word Is Too Often Profaned

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it;
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother;
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love;
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not, --
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: `Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear --
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Prometheus Unbound: Act I (excerpt)

SCENE.--A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus. Prometheus is discovered bound to the Precipice. Panthea and Ione are seated at his feet. Time, night. During the Scene, morning slowly breaks.

Prometheus.

Monarch of Gods and Demons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requiest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,--these are mine empire:--
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs

The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
--As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim--
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voic'd Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! Thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on pois'd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orb'd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak....

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Queen Mab: Part VI (excerpts)

"Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffus'd
A Spirit of activity and life,
That knows no term, cessation, or decay;
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
Extinguish'd in the dampness of the grave,
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe
In the dim newness of its being feels
The impulses of sublunary things,
And all is wonder to unpractis'd sense:
But, active, steadfast and eternal, still
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease;
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
Rolls round the eternal universe and shakes
Its undecaying battlement, presides,
Apportioning with irresistible law
The place each spring of its machine shall fill;
So that when waves on waves tumultuous heap
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-fords,
Whilst, to the eye of shipwreck'd mariner,
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
All seems unlink'd contingency and chance,
No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
Even the minutest molecule of light,
That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
Fulfils its destin'd, though invisible work,
The universal Spirit guides; nor less,
When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
Has led two hosts of dupes to battlefield,
That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves,
And call the sad work glory, does it rule
All passions: not a thought, a will, an act,
No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast
Their servitude to hide the shame they feel,
Nor the events enchaining every will,
That from the depths of unrecorded time
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
Unrecogniz'd or unforeseen by thee,
Soul of the Universe! eternal spring
Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,
Whose chains and massy walls
We feel, but cannot see.

"Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity! thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requir'st no prayers or praises; the caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast
To thy unvarying harmony: the slave,
Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,
And the good man, who lifts with virtuous pride
His being in the sight of happiness
That springs from his own works; the poison-tree,
Beneath whose shade all life is wither'd up,
And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords
A temple where the vows of happy love
Are register'd, are equal in thy sight:
No love, no hate thou cherishest; revenge
And favouritism, and worst desire of fame
Thou know'st not: all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind.

"Yes! when the sweeping storm of time
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruin'd fanes
And broken altars of the almighty Fiend
Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood
Through centuries clotted there has floated down
The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
Unchangeable! A shrine is rais'd to thee,
Which, nor the tempest-breath of time,
Nor the interminable flood
Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
Availeth to destroy--
The sensitive extension of the world.
That wondrous and eternal fane,
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,
To do the will of strong necessity,
And life, in multitudinous shapes,
Still pressing forward where no term can be,
Like hungry and unresting flame
Curls round the eternal columns of its strength."

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Remorse

AWAY! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drunk the last pale beam of even:
Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.
Pause not! the time is past! Every voice cries, 'Away!'
Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle mood:
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy stay:
Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

Away, away! to thy sad and silent home;
Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth;
Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,
And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth.
The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around thine head,
The blooms of dewy Spring shall gleam beneath thy feet:
But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that binds the dead,
Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou and peace, may
meet.

The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own repose,
For the weary winds are silent, or the moon is in the deep;
Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows;
Whatever moves or toils or grieves hath its appointed sleep.
Thou in the grave shalt rest:--yet, till the phantoms flee,
Which that house and heath and garden made dear to thee erewhile,
Thy remembrance and repentance and deep musings are not free
From the music of two voices, and the light of one sweet smile.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Rosalind and Helen: a Modern Eclogue

ROSALIND, HELEN, and her Child.

SCENE. The Shore of the Lake of Como.

HELEN

Come hither, my sweet Rosalind.
'T is long since thou and I have met;
And yet methinks it were unkind
Those moments to forget.
Come, sit by me. I see thee stand
By this lone lake, in this far land,
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,
Thy sweet voice to each tone of even
United, and thine eyes replying
To the hues of yon fair heaven.
Come, gentle friend! wilt sit by me?
And be as thou wert wont to be
Ere we were disunited?
None doth behold us now; the power
That led us forth at this lone hour
Will be but ill requited
If thou depart in scorn. Oh, come,
And talk of our abandoned home!
Remember, this is Italy,
And we are exiles. Talk with me
Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,
Barren and dark although they be,
Were dearer than these chestnut woods;
Those heathy paths, that inland stream,
And the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream;
Which that we have abandoned now,
Weighs on the heart like that remorse
Which altered friendship leaves. I seek
No more our youthful intercourse.
That cannot be! Rosalind, speak,
Speak to me! Leave me not! When morn did come,
When evening fell upon our common home,
When for one hour we parted,--do not frown;
I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken;
But turn to me. Oh! by this cherished token
Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
Turn, as 't were but the memory of me,
And not my scornèd self who prayed to thee!

ROSALIND

Is it a dream, or do I see
And hear frail Helen? I would flee
Thy tainting touch; but former years
Arise, and bring forbidden tears;
And my o'erburdened memory
Seeks yet its lost repose in thee.

I share thy crime. I cannot choose
But weep for thee; mine own strange grief
But seldom stoops to such relief;
Nor ever did I love thee less,
Though mourning o'er thy wickedness
Even with a sister's woe. I knew
What to the evil world is due,
And therefore sternly did refuse
To link me with the infamy
Of one so lost as Helen. Now,
Bewildered by my dire despair,
Wondering I blush, and weep that thou
Shouldst love me still--thou only!--There,
Let us sit on that gray stone
Till our mournful talk be done.

HELEN

Alas! not there; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear.
A sound from there, Rosalind dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs,
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow!
In the dell of yon dark chestnut wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own. The ghost of peace
Will not desert this spot. To-morrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,
We may sit here.

ROSALIND

Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.

HENRY

'T is Fenici's seat
Where you are going? This is not the way,
Mamma; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

HELEN

Yes, I know;
I was bewildered. Kiss me and be gay,
Dear boy; why do you sob?

HENRY

I do not know;
But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

HELEN

It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home,
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.
We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now. Good night.

The boy
Lifted a sudden look upon his mother,
And, in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face, laughed with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whispered in her ear, 'Bring home with you
That sweet strange lady-friend.' Then off he flew,
But stopped, and beckoned with a meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way
Beneath the forest's solitude.
It was a vast and antique wood,
Through which they took their way;
And the gray shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling
Still deeper solitude.
Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around,
Through which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came,
To a stone seat beside a spring,
O'er which the columned wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath
The overhanging deity.
O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,
Is beaming with many a mingled hue,
Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
In the light of his own loveliness;
And the birds, that in the fountain dip
Their plumes, with fearless fellowship
Above and round him wheel and hover.
The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high;
The chirping of the grasshopper
Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here;
Then through the intricate wild wood
A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now--

Gloom, and the trance of Nature now.
The snake is in his cave asleep;
The birds are on the branches dreaming;
Only the shadows creep;
Only the glow-worm is gleaming;
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when daylight fails,
And gray shades gather in the woods;
And the owls have all fled far away
In a merrier glen to hoot and play,
For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.
The accustomed nightingale still broods
On her accustomed bough,
But she is mute; for her false mate
Has fled and left her desolate.

This silent spot tradition old
Had peopled with the spectral dead.
For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold
And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair!
A fearful tale! the truth was worse;
For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude;
For beneath yon very sky,
Had they resigned to one another
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on its mother;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace,
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home,
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale;
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now, where some sudden impulse calls,
Following. He was a gentle boy

And in all gentle sorts took joy.
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir
Its marble calm; and Helen smiled
Through tears of awe on the gay child,
To think that a boy as fair as he,
In years which never more may be,
By that same fount, in that same wood,
The like sweet fancies had pursued;
And that a mother, lost like her,
Had mournfully sate watching him.
Then all the scene was wont to swim
Through the mist of a burning tear.
For many months had Helen known
This scene; and now she thither turned
Her footsteps, not alone.
The friend whose falsehood she had mourned
Sate with her on that seat of stone.
Silent they sate; for evening,
And the power its glimpses bring,
Had with one awful shadow quelled
The passion of their grief. They sate
With linked hands, for unrepelled
Had Helen taken Rosalind's.
Like the autumn wind, when it unbinds
The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair
Which is twined in the sultry summer air
Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre,
Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
And the sound of her heart that ever beat
As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
Till her thoughts were free to float and flow;
And from her laboring bosom now,
Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
The voice of a long-pent sorrow came.

ROSALIND

I saw the dark earth fall upon
The coffin; and I saw the stone
Laid over him whom this cold breast
Had pillowed to his nightly rest!
Thou knowest not, thou canst not know
My agony. Oh! I could not weep.
The sources whence such blessings flow
Were not to be approached by me!
But I could smile, and I could sleep,
Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watched--and would not thence depart--

My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone;
But when I told them, 'He is dead,'
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands and leaped about,
Answering each other's ecstasy
With many a prank and merry shout.
But I sate silent and alone,
Wrapped in the mock of mourning weed.

They laughed, for he was dead; but I
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathed name;
Till from that self-contention came
Remorse where sin was none; a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I 'll tell thee truth. He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of guile; his pale eyes ran
With tears which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek;
He was a coward to the strong;
He was a tyrant to the weak,
On whom his vengeance he would wreak;
For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow
His soul to its home so cold and hollow.
He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day!
Oft, when my little ones at play
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listened to some tale
Of travellers, or of fairyland,
When the light from the wood-fire's dying brand
Flashed on their faces,--if they heard
Or thought they heard upon the stair
His footstep, the suspended word
Died on my lips; we all grew pale;
The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully.

I 'll tell thee truth: I loved another.
His name in my ear was ever ringing,
His form to my brain was ever clinging;
Yet, if some stranger breathed that name,

My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast.
My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,
My days were dim in the shadow cast
By the memory of the same!
Day and night, day and night,
He was my breath and life and light,
For three short years, which soon were passed.
On the fourth, my gentle mother
Led me to the shrine, to be
His sworn bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar stair,
When my father came from a distant land,
And with a loud and fearful cry
Rushed between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin gray hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand,
And heard his words--and live! O God!
Wherefore do I live?--'Hold, hold!'
He cried, 'I tell thee 't is her brother!
Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of yon churchyard rests in her shroud so cold;
I am now weak, and pale, and old;
We were once dear to one another,
I and that corpse! Thou art our child!'
Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell.
They found him dead! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see;
But I was calm. I went away;
I was clammy-cold like clay.
I did not weep; I did not speak;
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive.
Alas! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone--it did not break.

My father lived a little while,
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woful smile.
When he was in the churchyard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread;
My mother looked at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content;
So I went forth from the same church door
To another husband's bed.
And this was he who died at last,
When weeks and months and years had passed,
Through which I firmly did fulfil
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquished will

Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
Falling forever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest;
Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossessed,
Its strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave--that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make
My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vowed task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair--
When she was a thing that did not stir,
And the crawling worms were cradling her
To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee,
I lived; a living pulse then beat
Beneath my heart that awakened me.
What was this pulse so warm and free?
Alas! I knew it could not be
My own dull blood. 'T was like a thought
Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
Under my bosom and in my brain,
And crept with the blood through every vein,
And hour by hour, day after day,
The wonder could not charm away
But laid in sleep my wakeful pain,
Until I knew it was a child,
And then I wept. For long, long years
These frozen eyes had shed no tears;
But now--'t was the season fair and mild
When April has wept itself to May;
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bowered round with leaves,
And down my cheeks the quick tears ran
Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves,
When warm spring showers are passing o'er.
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more!

I wept to think how hard it were
To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care,
And love and smiles; ere I knew yet
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
And haply, I would dream, 't were sweet
To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart's restless beat

And watch the growing soul beneath
Dawn in faint smiles; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs,
And search the depth of its fair eyes
For long departed memories!
And so I lived till that sweet load
Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed
The stream of years, and on it bore
Two shapes of gladness to my sight;
Two other babes, delightful more,
In my lost soul's abandoned night,
Than their own country ships may be
Sailing towards wrecked mariners
Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea.
For each, as it came, brought soothing tears;
And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
Sucking the sullen milk away,
About my frozen heart did play,
And weaned it, oh, how painfully--
As they themselves were weaned each one
From that sweet food--even from the thirst
Of death, and nothingness, and rest,
Strange inmate of a living breast,
Which all that I had undergone
Of grief and shame, since she who first
The gates of that dark refuge closed
Came to my sight, and almost burst
The seal of that Lethean spring--
But these fair shadows interposed.
For all delights are shadows now!
And from my brain to my dull brow
The heavy tears gather and flow.
I cannot speak--oh, let me weep!

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
Glimmered among the moonlight dew.
Her deep hard sobs and heavy sighs
Their echoes in the darkness threw.
When she grew calm, she thus did keep
The tenor of her tale:--

He died;
I know not how; he was not old,
If age be numbered by its years;
But he was bowed and bent with fears,
Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
Which, like fierce fever, left him weak;
And his strait lip and bloated cheek
Were warped in spasms by hollow sneers;
And selfish cares with barren plough,
Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed

Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men owned they were the same.

Seven days within my chamber lay
That corse, and my babes made holiday.
At last, I told them what is death.
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent breath,
And sate awe-stricken at my feet;
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet
To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave.
From me remorse then wrung that truth.
I could not bear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain. I dared not feign a groan;
And in their artless looks I saw,
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs; and they
Expressed it not in words, but said,
Each in its heart, how every day
Will pass in happy work and play,
Now he is dead and gone away!

After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shrouds within,
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living, but a corse
Is merciless, and Power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil,
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child! my tale grows old
With grief, and staggers; let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech,
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

Thou knowest what a thing is Poverty
Among the fallen on evil days.
'T is Crime, and Fear, and Infamy,
And houseless Want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and Pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain,
Foul Self-contempt, which drowns in sneers

Youth's starlight smile, and makes its tears
First like hot gall, then dry forever!
And well thou knowest a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported that, if e'er again
I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birthplace did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought; and he,
To whom next came their patrimony,
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold,
Aye watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony;
And with close lips and anxious brow
Stood canvassing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call;
For in that killing lie 't was said--
'She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire.'
Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar!
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half consumed,
As well might there be false as I
To those abhorred embraces doomed,
Far worse than fire's brief agony.
As to the Christian creed, if true
Or false, I never questioned it;
I took it as the vulgar do;
Nor my vexed soul had leisure yet
To doubt the things men say, or deem
That they are other than they seem.

All present who those crimes did hear,
In feigned or actual scorn and fear,
Men, women, children, slunk away,
Whispering with self-contented pride
Which half suspects its own base lie.
I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently I went my way,
Nor noticed I where joyously
Sate my two younger babes at play
In the courtyard through which I passed;
But went with footsteps firm and fast
Till I came to the brink of the ocean green,
And there, a woman with gray hairs,

Who had my mother's servant been,
Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
Made me accept a purse of gold,
Half of the earnings she had kept
To refuge her when weak and old.
With woe, which never sleeps or slept,
I wander now. 'T is a vain thought--
But on yon Alp, whose snowy head
'Mid the azure air is islanded,
(We see it--o'er the flood of cloud,
Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud--
From that gray stone where first we met)
There--now who knows the dead feel nought?--
Should be my grave; for he who yet
Is my soul's soul once said: 'T were sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
And winds, and lulling snows that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide,
Where weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close,
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure.
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?'
Then 't was a wild and playful saying
At which I laughed or seemed to laugh.
They were his words--now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph.
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt; and canst forgive,
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught,
And much less thee.

HELEN

Oh, speak not so!
But come to me and pour thy woe
Into this heart, full though it be,
Aye overflowing with its own.
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan,
Its likeness upon earth to be--
Its express image; but thou art
More wretched. Sweet, we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.

But wilt thou hear, since last we parted,
All that has left me broken-hearted?

ROSALIND

Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love, soon lost in total night.

HELEN

Alas! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold--wintry cold;
When the warm air weaves, among the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is wild,
And I am weak like a nursling child,
Though my soul with grief is gray and old.

ROSALIND

Weep not at thine own words, though they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?

HELEN

I fear 't will shake
Thy gentle heart with tears. Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more;
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief; a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly--but when he died,
With him lay dead both hope and pride.

Alas! all hope is buried now.
But then men dreamed the aged earth
Was laboring in that mighty birth
Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen--the happy age
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.

Among mankind what thence befell
Of strife, how vain, is known too well;
When Liberty's dear pæan fell
'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O Liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith,

And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth. In every other
First life, then love, its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet;
But he loved all things ever. Then
He passed amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armed power
Pleading for a world of woe.
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
'Mid the passions wild of humankind
He stood, like a spirit calming them;
For, it was said, his words could bind
Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But is revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
As where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendor quiver.
His very gestures touched to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before; his presence stung
The torturers with their victim's pain,
And none knew how; and through their ears
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
Men wondered, and some sneered to see
One sow what he could never reap;
For he is rich, they said, and young,
And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks fame, fame never crowned
The champion of a trampled creed;
If he seeks power, power is enthroned
'Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil
Those who would sit near power must toil;
And such, there sitting, all may see.
What seeks he? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed
Which the sea casts unreturningly.
That poor and hungry men should break
The laws which wreak them toil and scorn
We understand; but Lionel,
We know, is rich and nobly born.

So wondered they; yet all men loved
Young Lionel, though few approved;
All but the priests, whose hatred fell
Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,
The withering honey-dew which clings
Under the bright green buds of May
Whilst they unfold their emerald wings;
For he made verses wild and queer
On the strange creeds priests hold so dear
Because they bring them land and gold.
Of devils and saints and all such gear
He made tales which whoso heard or read
Would laugh till he were almost dead.
So this grew a proverb: 'Don't get old
Till Lionel's Banquet in Hell you hear,
And then you will laugh yourself young again.'
So the priests hated him, and he
Repaid their hate with cheerful glee.

Ah, smiles and joyance quickly died,
For public hope grew pale and dim
In an altered time and tide,
And in its wasting withered him,
As a summer flower that blows too soon
Droops in the smile of the waning moon,
When it scatters through an April night
The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.
None now hoped more. Gray Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne;
And Faith, the Python, undefeated
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train; and men
Were trampled and deceived again,
And words and shows again could bind
The wailing tribes of humankind
In scorn and famine. Fire and blood
Raged round the raging multitude,
To fields remote by tyrants sent
To be the scorned instrument
With which they drag from mines of gore
The chains their slaves yet ever wore;
And in the streets men met each other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals.
But each man found in his heart's brother
Cold cheer; for all, though half deceived,
The outworn creeds again believed,
And the same round anew began
Which the weary world yet ever ran.

Many then wept, not tears, but gall,
Within their hearts, like drops which fall

Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts that claim
Men's care--ambition, friendship, fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now despair--
Indue the colors of this change,
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and strange,
When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befell
To many,--most to Lionel,
Whose hope was like the life of youth
Within him, and when dead became
A spirit of unresting flame,
Which goaded him in his distress
Over the world's vast wilderness.
Three years he left his native land,
And on the fourth, when he returned,
None knew him; he was stricken deep
With some disease of mind, and turned
Into aught unlike Lionel.
On him--on whom, did he pause in sleep,
Serenest smiles were wont to keep,
And, did he wake, a winged band
Of bright Persuasions, which had fed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
Kept their swift pinions half outspread
To do on men his least command--
On him, whom once 't was paradise
Even to behold, now misery lay.
In his own heart 't was merciless--
To all things else none may express
Its innocence and tenderness.

'T was said that he had refuge sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange show; for there were found,
Blotted with tears--as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do--
These mournful verses on the ground,
By all who read them blotted too.

'How am I changed! my hopes were once like fire;
I loved, and I believed that life was love.
How am I lost! on wings of swift desire
Among Heaven's winds my spirit once did move.
I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire
My liquid sleep; I woke, and did approve
All Nature to my heart, and thought to make
A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

'I love, but I believe in love no more.
I feel desire, but hope not. Oh, from sleep
Most vainly must my weary brain implore
Its long lost flattery now! I wake to weep,
And sit through the long day gnawing the core
Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep--
Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure--
To my own soul its self-consuming treasure.'

He dwelt beside me near the sea;
And oft in evening did we meet,
When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
O'er the yellow sands with silver feet,
And talked. Our talk was sad and sweet,
Till slowly from his mien there passed
The desolation which it spoke;
And smiles--as when the lightning's blast
Has parched some heaven-delighting oak,
The next spring shows leaves pale and rare,
But like flowers delicate and fair,
On its rent boughs--again arrayed
His countenance in tender light;
His words grew subtle fire, which made
The air his hearers breathed delight;
His motions, like the winds, were free,
Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
Then fade away in circlets faint;
And wingèd Hope--on which upborne
His soul seemed hovering in his eyes,
Like some bright spirit newly born
Floating amid the sunny skies--
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk, and looks, and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woe its shadow backward threw;
Till, like an exhalation spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious--sweet
And subtle mists of sense and thought,
Which wrapped us soon, when we might meet,
Almost from our own looks and aught
The wild world holds. And so his mind
Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear;
For ever now his health declined,
Like some frail bark which cannot bear
The impulse of an altered wind,
Though prosperous; and my heart grew full,
'Mid its new joy, of a new care;
For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
As rose-o'ershadowed lilies are;
And soon his deep and sunny hair,

In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins
Beat, not like animal life, but love
Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
When life had failed, and all its pains;
And sudden sleep would seize him oft
Like death, so calm,--but that a tear,
His pointed eye-lashes between,
Would gather in the light serene
Of smiles whose lustre bright and soft
Beneath lay undulating there.
His breath was like inconstant flame
As eagerly it went and came;
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
Till, like an image in the lake
Which rains disturb, my tears would break
The shadow of that slumber deep.
Then he would bid me not to weep,
And say, with flattery false yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would never part with him.
And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided;
For when he said, that many a rite,
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shuddered, and then laughing said--
'We will have rites our faith to bind,
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind.'

'T was sunset as I spoke. One star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent
Seized upon Lionel, and bore
His chained limbs to a dreary tower,
In the midst of a city vast and wide.
For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must roasted be
In hell's red lakes immortally,
Yet even on earth must he abide
The vengeance of their slaves: a trial,
I think, men call it. What avail
Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
From the fierce savage nursed in hate?
What the knit soul that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek which late
It painted with its own delight?

We were divided. As I could,
I stilled the tingling of my blood,
And followed him in their despite,
As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corse of her only child;
And when we came to the prison door,
And I prayed to share his dungeon floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurned,
And when men drove me forth, and I
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,--
A farewell look of love he turned,
Half calming me; then gazed awhile,
As if through that black and massy pile,
And through the crowd around him there,
And through the dense and murky air,
And the thronged streets, he did espy
What poets know and prophesy;
And said, with voice that made them shiver
And clung like music in my brain,
And which the mute walls spoke again
Prolonging it with deepened strain--
'Fear not the tyrants shall rule forever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death;
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks, in the surge of eternity.'

I dwelt beside the prison gate;
And the strange crowd that out and in
Passed, some, no doubt, with mine own fate,
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
But the fever of care was louder within.
Soon but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence.
I saw his thin and languid form,
As leaning on the jailor's arm,
Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while
To meet his mute and faded smile
And hear his words of kind farewell,
He tottered forth from his damp cell.
Many had never wept before,
From whom fast tears then gushed and fell;
Many will relent no more,
Who sobbed like infants then; ay, all
Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
The rulers or the slaves of law,
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human, till strong shame
Made them again become the same.

The prison bloodhounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught,
And fondly crouched and fawned on him;
And men have heard the prisoners say,
Who in their rotting dungeons lay,
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept
Their trampled bosoms almost slept,
Where, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide torn and bleeding,--
Because their jailors' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.

I know not how, but we were free;
And Lionel sate alone with me,
As the carriage drove through the streets apace;
And we looked upon each other's face;
And the blood in our fingers intertwined
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Through the veins of each united frame.
So through the long, long streets we passed
Of the million-peopled City vast;
Which is that desert, where each one
Seeks his mate yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none;
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green.
And then I sunk in his embrace
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love; and so we travelled on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row briar;
And there were odors then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wings,
Floated and mingled far away
'Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon,
And light and sound ebbed from the earth,
Like the tide of the full and the weary sea
To the depths of its own tranquillity,
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attune;

Like flowers, which on each other close
Their languid leaves when daylight's gone,
We lay, till new emotions came,
Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds diviner far than earth;--
Which, like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky,
Then slowly disunite, passed by
And left the tenderness of tears,
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep:--so we travelled on
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea,
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The massy forest shadowed o'er.

The ancient steward with hair all hoar,
As we alighted, wept to see
His master changed so fearfully;
And the old man's sobs did waken me
From my dream of unremaining gladness;
The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness
When I looked, and saw that there was death
On Lionel. Yet day by day
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my soul I dared to say,
Nothing so bright can pass away;
Death is dark, and foul, and dull,
But he is--oh, how beautiful!
Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low;
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow
From sunset o'er the Alpine snow;
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odors brought
From mountain flowers, even as it passed,
His cheek would change, as the noonday sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his color come and go,
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
Amid the dew of his tender eyes;
And the breath, with intermitting flow,
Made his pale lips quiver and part.

You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick but not strong; and with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy lonelineses
His neck, and win me so to mingle
In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined,--
Alas! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein,
Like a captive in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell.
But his, it seemed already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me!
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it passed, till soon--
As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon,
Beneath its light invisible,
Is seen when it folds its gray wings again
To alight on midnight's dusky plain--
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul
Passed from beneath that strong control,
And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood,
On a green and sea-girt promontory
Not far from where we dwelt, there stood,
In record of a sweet sad story,
An altar and a temple bright
Circled by steps, and o'er the gate
Was sculptured, 'To Fidelity;'
And in the shrine an image sate
All veiled; but there was seen the light
Of smiles which faintly could express
A mingled pain and tenderness
Through that ethereal drapery.
The left hand held the head, the right--
Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
You might see the nerves quivering within--
Was forcing the point of a barbèd dart
Into its side-convulsing heart.
An unskilled hand, yet one informed
With genius, had the marble warmed
With that pathetic life. This tale
It told: A dog had from the sea,
When the tide was raging fearfully,
Dragged Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
Then died beside her on the sand,
And she that temple thence had planned;
But it was Lionel's own hand
Had wrought the image. Each new moon
That lady did, in this lone fane,

The rites of a religion sweet
Whose god was in her heart and brain.
The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
On the marble floor beneath her feet,
And she brought crowns of sea-buds white
Whose odor is so sweet and faint,
And weeds, like branching chrysolite,
Woven in devices fine and quaint;
And tears from her brown eyes did stain
The altar; need but look upon
That dying statue, fair and wan,
If tears should cease, to weep again;
And rare Arabian odors came,
Through the myrtle copses, steaming thence
From the hissing frankincense,
Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome--
That ivory dome, whose azure night
With golden stars, like heaven, was bright
O'er the split cedar's pointed flame;
And the lady's harp would kindle there
The melody of an old air,
Softer than sleep; the villagers
Mixed their religion up with hers,
And, as they listened round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fane.
Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering gray, and soon her strain
The nightingale began; now loud,
Climbing in circles the windless sky,
Now dying music; suddenly
'T is scattered in a thousand notes;
And now to the hushed ear it floats
Like field-smells known in infancy,
Then, failing, soothes the air again.
We sate within that temple lone,
Pavilioned round with Parian stone;
His mother's harp stood near, and oft
I had awakened music soft
Amid its wires; the nightingale
Was pausing in her heaven-taught tale.
'Now drain the cup,' said Lionel,
'Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song!
Heard'st thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstrelsy?
Heard'st thou not that those who die
Awake in a world of ecstasy?
That love, when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought, to the world's dim boundaries clinging,

And music, when one beloved is singing,
Is death? Let us drain right joyously
The cup which the sweet bird fills for me.'
He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own; like spirit his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine,
Filled me with the flame divine
Which in their orbs was burning far,
Like the light of an unmeasured star
In the sky of midnight dark and deep;
Yes, 't was his soul that did inspire
Sounds which my skill could ne'er awaken;
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony;
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came
From my touch, that wandered like quick flame,
And from my bosom, laboring
With some unutterable thing.
The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble; in some mood
Of wordless thought Lionel stood
So pale, that even beside his cheek
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness; yet his countenance,
Raised upward, burned with radiance
Of spirit-piercing joy whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
With beams that might not be confined.
I paused, but soon his gestures kindled
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted; and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled,
And, from the twinkling wires among,
My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life-dissolving sound,
Yet faint; in aëry rings they bound
My Lionel, who, as every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly;
And slowly now he turned to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy; with look serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace,
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs; words I dare not say
We mixed, and on his lips mine fed
Till they methought felt still and cold.
'What is it with thee, love?' I said;

No word, no look, no motion! yes,
There was a change, but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment's hope be told.
I looked,--and knew that he was dead;
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls when life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

Oh, that I were now dead! but such--
Did they not, love, demand too much,
Those dying murmurs?--he forbade.
Oh, that I once again were mad!
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy! did I forget thee too?
Alas, we know not what we do
When we speak words.

No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea-shore.
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shapes did seem to sit
Beside me, on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it.
Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers,
And the stars methought grew unlike ours,
And the azure sky and the stormless sea
Made me believe that I had died
And waked in a world which was to me
Drear hell, though heaven to all beside.
Then a dead sleep fell on my mind,
Whilst animal life many long years
Had rescued from a chasm of tears;
And, when I woke, I wept to find
That the same lady, bright and wise,
With silver locks and quick brown eyes,
The mother of my Lionel,
Had tended me in my distress,
And died some months before. Nor less
Wonder, but far more peace and joy,
Brought in that hour my lovely boy.
For through that trance my soul had well
The impress of thy being kept;
And if I waked or if I slept,
No doubt, though memory faithless be,
Thy image ever dwelt on me;
And thus, O Lionel, like thee
Is our sweet child. 'T is sure most strange
I knew not of so great a change
As that which gave him birth, who now
Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me, and that of all
The ready lies of law bereft
My child and me,--might well befall.
But let me think not of the scorn
Which from the meanest I have borne,
When, for my child's beloved sake,
I mixed with slaves, to vindicate
The very laws themselves do make;
Let me not say scorn is my fate,
Lest I be proud, suffering the same
With those who live in deathless fame.

She ceased.--'Lo, where red morning through the woods
Is burning o'er the dew!' said Rosalind.
And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves, now wind
With equal steps and fingers intertwined.
Thence to a lonely dwelling, where the shore
Is shadowed with steep rocks, and cypresses
Cleave with their dark green cones the silent skies
And with their shadows the clear depths below,

And where a little terrace from its bowers
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon flowers
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o'er
The liquid marble of the windless lake;
And where the aged forest's limbs look hoar
Under the leaves which their green garments make,
They come. 'T is Helen's home, and clean and white,
Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude; its casements bright
Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within 't was scarce like Italy.
And when she saw how all things there were planned
As in an English home, dim memory
Disturbed poor Rosalind; she stood as one
Whose mind is where his body cannot be,
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said, 'Observe, that brow was Lionel's,
Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes--they are two wells
Of liquid love. Let us not wake him yet.'
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept
A shower of burning tears which fell upon
His face, and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth--changed in all else, yet friends again,

Such as they were, when o'er the mountain heather
They wandered in their youth through sun and rain.
And after many years, for human things
Change even like the ocean and the wind,
Her daughter was restored to Rosalind,
And in their circle thence some visitings
Of joy 'mid their new calm would intervene.
A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
Like springs which mingle in one flood became;
And in their union soon their parents saw
The shadow of the peace denied to them.
And Rosalind--for when the living stem
Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall--
Died ere her time; and with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors followed her remains
Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
Her tomb; and on Chiavenna's precipice
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice,
Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun,
Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
The last, when it had sunk; and through the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheelèd round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home,
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Filled the frore air with unaccustomed light;
Such flowers as in the wintry memory bloom
Of one friend left adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less, death slower led
Into the peace of his dominion cold.
She died among her kindred, being old.
And know, that if love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blessed as now Helen and Rosalind.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song

Rarely, rarely comest thou,
 Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
 Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

How shall ever one like me
 Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
 Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

As a lizard with the shade
 Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed;
 Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not her.

Let me set my mournful ditty
 To a merry measure;--
Thou wilt never come for pity,
 Thou wilt come for pleasure;
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

I love all that thou lovest,
 Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
 And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

I love snow and all the forms
 Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
 Everything almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

I love tranquil solitude,
 And such society
As is quiet, wise, and good;
 Between thee and me
What difference? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love--though he has wings,
 And like light can flee,
But above all other things,

Spirit, I love thee--
Thou art love and life! O come!
Make once more my heart thy home!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song Of Proserpine

Sacred Goddess, Mother Earth,
Thou from whose immortal bosom
Gods and men and beasts have birth,
Leaf and blade, and bud and blossom,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

If with mists of evening dew
Thou dost nourish these young flowers
Till they grow in scent and hue
Fairest children of the Hours,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song: Rarely, rarely, comest thou

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Spirit of Delight!
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Many a weary night and day
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Spirit, I love thee--
Thou art love and life! Oh come,
Make once more my heart thy home.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Stanzas Written In Dejection Near Naples

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light,
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The city's voice itself, is soft like Solitude's.

I see the deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone,--
The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned--
Nor fame nor power, nor love, nor leisure,
Others I see whom these surround--
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;--
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have born and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;
They might lament--for I am one
Whom men love not,--and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Cloud

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning, my pilot, sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits;

Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardors of rest and of love,

And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine aery nest,
As still as a brooding dove.
That orb'd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;

And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,--
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-colored bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colors wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Fitful Alternations of the Rain

The fitful alternations of the rain,
When the chill wind, languid as with pain
Of its own heavy moisture, here and there
Drives through the gray and beamless atmosphere

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Indian Serenade

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me--who knows how?
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream--
The champak odors fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart;
As I must on thine,
Oh, beloved as thou art!

O lift me from the grass!
die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast;--
Oh! press it to thine own again,
Where it will break at last.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Invitation

BEST and brightest, come away!
Fairer far than this fair Day,
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle on the brake.
The brightest hour of unborn Spring,
Through the winter wandering,
Found, it seems, the halcyon Morn
To hoar February born.
Bending from heaven, in azure mirth,
It kiss'd the forehead of the Earth;
And smiled upon the silent sea;
And bade the frozen streams be free;
And waked to music all their fountains;
And breathed upon the frozen mountains;
And like a prophetess of May
Strew'd flowers upon the barren way,
Making the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs--
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.
I leave this notice on my door
For each accustom'd visitor:--
'I am gone into the fields
To take what this sweet hour yields.
Reflection, you may come to-morrow;
Sit by the fireside with Sorrow.
You with the unpaid bill, Despair,--
You, tiresome verse-reciter, Care,--
I will pay you in the grave,--
Death will listen to your stave.
Expectation too, be off!
To-day is for itself enough.
Hope, in pity mock not Woe
With smiles, nor follow where I go;
Long having lived on your sweet food,
At length I find one moment's good
After long pain: with all your love,
This you never told me of.'

Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains;
And the pools where winter rains

Image all their roof of leaves;
Where the pine its garland weaves
Of sapless green and ivy dun
Round stems that never kiss the sun;
Where the lawns and pastures be,
And the sandhills of the sea;
Where the melting hoar-frost wets
The daisy-star that never sets,
And wind-flowers, and violets
Which yet join not scent to hue,
Crown the pale year weak and new;
When the night is left behind
In the deep east, dun and blind,
And the blue noon is over us,
And the multitudinous
Billows murmur at our feet
Where the earth and ocean meet,
And all things seem only one
In the universal sun.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Moon

I

AND, like a dying lady lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapp'd in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The mood arose up in the murky east,
A white and shapeless mass.

II

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Question

I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
Faint oxlips; tender bluebells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets--
Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth--
Its mother's face with Heaven's collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cowbind and the moonlight-coloured may,
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray;
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with white,
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,--and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it!--Oh! to whom?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Triumph of Life

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory & of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, & the mask
Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth.
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, & at the birth
Of light, the Ocean's orison arose
To which the birds tempered their matin lay,
All flowers in field or forest which unclosed
Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray
Burned slow & unconsumably, & sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air,
And in succession due, did Continent,
Isle, Ocean, & all things that in them wear
The form & character of mortal mould
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear
Their portion of the toil which he of old
Took as his own & then imposed on them;
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold
Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep,
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem
Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine: before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the Deep
Was at my feet, & Heaven above my head
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread
Was so transparent that the scene came through
As clear as when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills they glimmer; and I knew
That I had felt the freshness of that dawn,
Bathed in the same cold dew my brow & hair
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn
Under the self same bough, & heard as there
The birds, the fountains & the Ocean hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air.
And then a Vision on my brain was rolled.

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay
This was the tenour of my waking dream.
Methought I sate beside a public way
Thick strewn with summer dust, & a great stream
Of people there was hurrying to & fro
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,
All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, yet so
Was borne amid the crowd as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier.--

Old age & youth, manhood & infancy,
 Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,
 Some flying from the thing they feared & some
 Seeking the object of another's fear,
 And others as with steps towards the tomb
 Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
 And others mournfully within the gloom
 Of their own shadow walked, and called it death ...
 And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
 Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath.
 But more with motions which each other crost
 Pursued or shunned the shadows the clouds threw
 Or birds within the noonday ether lost,
 Upon that path where flowers never grew;
 And weary with vain toil & faint for thirst
 Heard not the fountains whose melodious dew
 Out of their mossy cells forever burst
 Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
 Of grassy paths, & wood lawns interspersed
 With overarching elms & caverns cold,
 And violet banks where sweet dreams brood, but they
 Pursued their serious folly as of old
 And as I gazed methought that in the way
 The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
 When the South wind shakes the extinguished day.--
 And a cold glare, intenser than the noon
 But icy cold, obscured with [[blank]] light
 The Sun as he the stars. Like the young moon
 When on the sunlit limits of the night
 Her white shell trembles amid crimson air
 And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might
 Doth, as a herald of its coming, bear
 The ghost of her dead Mother, whose dim form
 Bends in dark ether from her infant's chair,
 So came a chariot on the silent storm
 Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
 So sate within as one whom years deform
 Beneath a dusky hood & double cape
 Crouching within the shadow of a tomb,
 And o'er what seemed the head, a cloud like crape,
 Was bent a dun & faint ethereal gloom
 Tempering the light; upon the chariot's beam
 A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume
 The guidance of that wonder-winged team.
 The Shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
 Were lost: I heard alone on the air's soft stream
 The music of their ever moving wings.
 All the four faces of that charioteer
 Had their eyes banded . . . little profit brings
 Speed in the van & blindness in the rear,
 Nor then avail the beams that quench the Sun
 Or that his banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been, or will be done.--
So ill was the car guided, but it past
With solemn speed majestically on . . .
The crowd gave way, & I arose aghast,
Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
And saw like clouds upon the thunder blast
The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around; such seemed the jubilee
As when to greet some conqueror's advance
Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
From senatehouse & prison & theatre
When Freedom left those who upon the free
Had bound a yoke which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the true similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er
The chariot rolled a captive multitude
Was driven; althose who had grown old in power
Or misery,--all who have their age subdued,
By action or by suffering, and whose hour
Was drained to its last sand in weal or woe,
So that the trunk survived both fruit & flower;
All those whose fame or infamy must grow
Till the great winter lay the form & name
Of their own earth with them forever low,
All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits to the Conqueror, but as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame
Fled back like eagles to their native noon,
Of those who put aside the diadem
Of earthly thrones or gems, till the last one
Were there;--for they of Athens & Jerusalem
Were neither mid the mighty captives seen
Nor mid the ribald crowd that followed them
Or fled before . . . Now swift, fierce & obscene
The wild dance maddens in the van, & those
Who lead it, fleet as shadows on the green,
Outspeed the chariot & without repose
Mix with each other in tempestuous measure
To savage music Wilder as it grows,
They, tortured by the agonizing pleasure,
Convulsed & on the rapid whirlwinds spun
Of that fierce spirit, whose unholy leisure
Was soothed by mischief since the world begun,
Throw back their heads & loose their streaming hair,
And in their dance round her who dims the Sun
Maidens & youths fling their wild arms in air
As their feet twinkle; they recede, and now
Bending within each other's atmosphere
Kindle invisibly; and as they glow
Like moths by light attracted & repelled,
Oft to new bright destruction come & go.
Till like two clouds into one vale impelled

That shake the mountains when their lightnings mingle
 And die in rain,--the fiery band which held
 Their natures, snaps . . . ere the shock cease to tingle
 One falls and then another in the path
 Senseless, nor is the desolation single,
 Yet ere I can say where the chariot hath
 Past over them; nor other trace I find
 But as of foam after the Ocean's wrath
 Is spent upon the desert shore.--Behind,
 Old men, and women foully disarrayed
 Shake their grey hair in the insulting wind,
 Limp in the dance & strain, with limbs decayed,
 Seeking to reach the light which leaves them still
 Farther behind & deeper in the shade.
 But not the less with impotence of will
 They wheel, though ghastly shadows interpose
 Round them & round each other, and fulfill
 Their work and to the dust whence they arose
 Sink & corruption veils them as they lie
 And frost in these performs what fire in those.
 Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
 Half to myself I said, "And what is this?
 Whose shape is that within the car? & why"-
 I would have added--"is all here amiss?"
 But a voice answered . . . "Life" . . . I turned & knew
 (O Heaven have mercy on such wretchedness!)
 That what I thought was an old root which grew
 To strange distortion out of the hill side
 Was indeed one of that deluded crew,
 And that the grass which methought hung so wide
 And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
 And that the holes it vainly sought to hide
 Were or had been eyes.--"If thou canst forbear
 To join the dance, which I had well forborne,"
 Said the grim Feature, of my thought aware,
 "I will now tell that which to this deep scorn
 Led me & my companions, and relate
 The progress of the pageant since the morn;
 "If thirst of knowledge doth not thus abate,
 Follow it even to the night, but I
 Am weary" . . . Then like one who with the weight
 Of his own words is staggered, wearily
 He paused, and ere he could resume, I cried,
 "First who art thou?" . . . "Before thy memory
 "I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did, & died,
 And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
 Earth had with purer nutriment supplied
 "Corruption would not now thus much inherit
 Of what was once Rousseau--nor this disguise
 Stained that within which still disdains to wear it.--
 "If I have been extinguished, yet there rise
 A thousand beacons from the spark I bore."--

"And who are those chained to the car?" "The Wise,
 "The great, the unforgotten: they who wore
 Mitres & helms & crowns, or wreathes of light,
 Signs of thought's empire over thought; their lore
 "Taught them not this--to know themselves; their might
 Could not repress the mutiny within,
 And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night
 "Caught them ere evening." "Who is he with chin
 Upon his breast and hands crost on his chain?"
 "The Child of a fierce hour; he sought to win
 "The world, and lost all it did contain
 Of greatness, in its hope destroyed; & more
 Of fame & peace than Virtue's self can gain
 "Without the opportunity which bore
 Him on its eagle's pinion to the peak
 From which a thousand climbers have before
 "Fall'n as Napoleon fell."--I felt my cheek
 Alter to see the great form pass away
 Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak
 That every pigmy kicked it as it lay--
 And much I grieved to think how power & will
 In opposition rule our mortal day--
 And why God made irreconcilable
 Good & the means of good; and for despair
 I half disdained mine eye's desire to fill
 With the spent vision of the times that were
 And scarce have ceased to be . . . "Dost thou behold,"
 Said then my guide, "those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire,
 "Frederic, & Kant, Catherine, & Leopold,
 Chained hoary anarchy, demagogue & sage
 Whose name the fresh world thinks already old--
 "For in the battle Life & they did wage
 She remained conqueror--I was overcome
 By my own heart alone, which neither age
 "Nor tears nor infamy nor now the tomb
 Could temper to its object."--"Let them pass"--
 I cried--"the world & its mysterious doom
 "Is not so much more glorious than it was
 That I desire to worship those who drew
 New figures on its false & fragile glass
 "As the old faded."--"Figures ever new
 Rise on the bubble, paint them how you may;
 We have but thrown, as those before us threw,
 "Our shadows on it as it past away.
 But mark, how chained to the triumphal chair
 The mighty phantoms of an elder day--
 "All that is mortal of great Plato there
 Expiates the joy & woe his master knew not;
 That star that ruled his doom was far too fair--
 "And Life, where long that flower of Heaven grew not,
 Conquered the heart by love which gold or pain
 Or age or sloth or slavery could subdue not--

"And near [[blank]] walk the [[blank]] twain,
 The tutor & his pupil, whom Dominion
 Followed as tame as vulture in a chain.--
 "The world was darkened beneath either pinion
 Of him whom from the flock of conquerors
 Fame singled as her thunderbearing minion;
 "The other long outlived both woes & wars,
 Throned in new thoughts of men, and still had kept
 The jealous keys of truth's eternal doors
 "If Bacon's spirit [[blank]] had not leapt
 Like lightning out of darkness; he compelled
 The Proteus shape of Nature's as it slept
 "To wake & to unbar the caves that held
 The treasure of the secrets of its reign--
 See the great bards of old who inly quelled
 "The passions which they sung, as by their strain
 May well be known: their living melody
 Tempers its own contagion to the vein
 "Of those who are infected with it--I
 Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!--
 "And so my words were seeds of misery--
 Even as the deeds of others."--"Not as theirs,"
 I said--he pointed to a company
 In which I recognized amid the heirs
 Of Caesar's crime from him to Constantine,
 The Anarchs old whose force & murderous snares
 Had founded many a sceptre bearing line
 And spread the plague of blood & gold abroad,
 And Gregory & John and men divine
 Who rose like shadows between Man & god
 Till that eclipse, still hanging under Heaven,
 Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode
 For the true Sun it quenched.--"Their power was given
 But to destroy," replied the leader--"I
 Am one of those who have created, even
 "If it be but a world of agony."--
 "Whence camest thou & whither goest thou?
 How did thy course begin," I said, "& why?
 "Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
 Of people, & my heart of one sad thought.--
 Speak."--"Whence I came, partly I seem to know,
 "And how & by what paths I have been brought
 To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;
 Why this should be my mind can compass not;
 "Whither the conqueror hurries me still less.
 But follow thou, & from spectator turn
 Actor or victim in this wretchedness,
 "And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
 From thee.--Now listen . . . In the April prime
 When all the forest tops began to burn
 "With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
 Of the young year, I found myself asleep

Under a mountain which from unknown time
 "Had yawned into a cavern high & deep,
 And from it came a gentle rivulet
 Whose water like clear air in its calm sweep
 "Bent the soft grass & kept for ever wet
 The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
 With sound which all who hear must needs forget
 "All pleasure & all pain, all hate & love,
 Which they had known before that hour of rest:
 A sleeping mother then would dream not of
 "The only child who died upon her breast
 At eventide, a king would mourn no more
 The crown of which his brow was dispossessed
 "When the sun lingered o'er the Ocean floor
 To gild his rival's new prosperity.--
 Thou wouldst forget thus vainly to deplore
 "Ills, which if ill, can find no cure from thee,
 The thought of which no other sleep will quell
 Nor other music blot from memory--
 "So sweet & deep is the oblivious spell.--
 Whether my life had been before that sleep
 The Heaven which I imagine, or a Hell
 "Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep,
 I know not. I arose & for a space
 The scene of woods & waters seemed to keep,
 "Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
 Of light diviner than the common Sun
 Sheds on the common Earth, but all the place
 "Was filled with many sounds woven into one
 Oblivious melody, confusing sense
 Amid the gliding waves & shadows dun;
 "And as I looked the bright omnipresence
 Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
 And the Sun's image radiantly intense
 "Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
 Like gold, and threaded all the forest maze
 With winding paths of emerald fire--there stood
 "Amid the sun, as he amid the blaze
 Of his own glory, on the vibrating
 Floor of the fountain, paved with flashing rays,
 "A shape all light, which with one hand did fling
 Dew on the earth, as if she were the Dawn
 Whose invisible rain forever seemed to sing
 "A silver music on the mossy lawn,
 And still before her on the dusky grass
 Iris her many coloured scarf had drawn.--
 "In her right hand she bore a crystal glass
 Mantling with bright Nepenthe;--the fierce splendour
 Fell from her as she moved under the mass
 "Of the deep cavern, & with palms so tender
 Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow,
 Glided along the river, and did bend her

"Head under the dark boughs, till like a willow
 Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
 That whispered with delight to be their pillow.--
 "As one enamoured is upborne in dream
 O'er lily-paven lakes mid silver mist
 To wondrous music, so this shape might seem
 "Partly to tread the waves with feet which kist
 The dancing foam, partly to glide along
 The airs that roughened the moist amethyst,
 "Or the slant morning beams that fell among
 The trees, or the soft shadows of the trees;
 And her feet ever to the ceaseless song
 "Of leaves & winds & waves & birds & bees
 And falling drops moved in a measure new
 Yet sweet, as on the summer evening breeze
 "Up from the lake a shape of golden dew
 Between two rocks, athwart the rising moon,
 Moves up the east, where eagle never flew.--
 "And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
 To which they moved, seemed as they moved, to blot
 The thoughts of him who gazed on them, & soon
 "All that was seemed as if it had been not,
 As if the gazer's mind was strewn beneath
 Her feet like embers, & she, thought by thought,
 "Trampled its fires into the dust of death,
 As Day upon the threshold of the east
 Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath
 "Of darkness reillumines even the least
 Of heaven's living eyes--like day she came,
 Making the night a dream; and ere she ceased
 "To move, as one between desire and shame
 Suspended, I said--'If, as it doth seem,
 Thou comest from the realm without a name,
 " 'Into this valley of perpetual dream,
 Shew whence I came, and where I am, and why--
 Pass not away upon the passing stream.'
 " 'Arise and quench thy thirst,' was her reply,
 And as a shut lily, stricken by the wand
 Of dewy morning's vital alchemy,
 "I rose; and, bending at her sweet command,
 Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
 And suddenly my brain became as sand
 "Where the first wave had more than half erased
 The track of deer on desert Labrador,
 Whilst the fierce wolf from which they fled amazed
 "Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore
 Until the second bursts--so on my sight
 Burst a new Vision never seen before.--
 "And the fair shape waned in the coming light
 As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
 From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite
 "Of sunrise ere it strike the mountain tops--

And as the presence of that fairest planet
 Although unseen is felt by one who hopes
 "That his day's path may end as he began it
 In that star's smile, whose light is like the scent
 Of a jonquil when evening breezes fan it,
 "Or the soft note in which his dear lament
 The Brescian shepherd breathes, or the caress
 That turned his weary slumber to content.--
 "So knew I in that light's severe excess
 The presence of that shape which on the stream
 Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,
 "More dimly than a day appearing dream,
 The ghost of a forgotten form of sleep
 A light from Heaven whose half extinguished beam
 "Through the sick day in which we wake to weep
 Glimmers, forever sought, forever lost.--
 So did that shape its obscure tenour keep
 "Beside my path, as silent as a ghost;
 But the new Vision, and its cold bright car,
 With savage music, stunning music, crost
 "The forest, and as if from some dread war
 Triumphantly returning, the loud million
 Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star.--
 "A moving arch of victory the vermilion
 And green & azure plumes of Iris had
 Built high over her wind-winged pavilion,
 "And underneath aetherial glory clad
 The wilderness, and far before her flew
 The tempest of the splendour which forbade
 Shadow to fall from leaf or stone;--the crew
 Seemed in that light like atomies that dance
 Within a sunbeam.--Some upon the new
 "Embroidery of flowers that did enhance
 The grassy vesture of the desert, played,
 Forgetful of the chariot's swift advance;
 "Others stood gazing till within the shade
 Of the great mountain its light left them dim.--
 Others outspeeded it, and others made
 "Circles around it like the clouds that swim
 Round the high moon in a bright sea of air,
 And more did follow, with exulting hymn,
 "The chariot & the captives fettered there,
 But all like bubbles on an eddying flood
 Fell into the same track at last & were
 "Borne onward.--I among the multitude
 Was swept; me sweetest flowers delayed not long,
 Me not the shadow nor the solitude,
 "Me not the falling stream's Lethean song,
 Me, not the phantom of that early form
 Which moved upon its motion,--but among
 "The thickest billows of the living storm
 I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime

Of that cold light, whose airs too soon deform.--
"Before the chariot had begun to climb
The opposing steep of that mysterious dell,
Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme
"Of him whom from the lowest depths of Hell
Through every Paradise & through all glory
Love led serene, & who returned to tell
"In words of hate & awe the wondrous story
How all things are transfigured, except Love;
For deaf as is a sea which wrath makes hoary
"The world can hear not the sweet notes that move
The sphere whose light is melody to lovers---
A wonder worthy of his rhyme--the grove
"Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers,
The earth was grey with phantoms, & the air
Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers
"A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, bring ere evening
Strange night upon some Indian isle,--thus were
"Phantoms diffused around, & some did fling
Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
Behind them, some like eaglets on the wing
"Were lost in the white blaze, others like elves
Danced in a thousand unimagined shapes
Upon the sunny streams & grassy shelves;
"And others sate chattering like restless apes
On vulgar paws and voluble like fire.
Some made a cradle of the ermined capes
"Of kingly mantles, some upon the tiar
Of pontiffs sate like vultures, others played
Within the crown which girt with empire
"A baby's or an idiot's brow, & made
Their nests in it; the old anatomies
Sate hatching their bare brood under the shade
"Of demon wings, and laughed from their dead eyes
To reassume the delegated power
Arrayed in which these worms did monarchize
"Who make this earth their charnel.--Others more
Humble, like falcons sate upon the fist
Of common men, and round their heads did soar,
"Or like small gnats & flies, as thick as mist
On evening marshes, thronged about the brow
Of lawyer, statesman, priest & theorist,
"And others like discoloured flakes of snow
On fairest bosoms & the sunniest hair
Fell, and were melted by the youthful glow
"Which they extinguished; for like tears, they were
A veil to those from whose faint lids they rained
In drops of sorrow.--I became aware
"Of whence those forms proceeded which thus stained
The track in which we moved; after brief space
From every form the beauty slowly waned,

"From every firmest limb & fairest face
The strength & freshness fell like dust, & left
The action & the shape without the grace
"Of life; the marble brow of youth was cleft
With care, and in the eyes where once hope shone
Desire like a lioness bereft
"Of its last cub, glared ere it died; each one
Of that great crowd sent forth incessantly
These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown
"In Autumn evening from a popular tree--
Each, like himself & like each other were,
At first, but soon distorted, seemed to be
"Obscure clouds moulded by the casual air;
And of this stuff the car's creative ray
Wrought all the busy phantoms that were there
"As the sun shapes the clouds--thus, on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all, and long before the day
"Was old, the joy which waked like Heaven's glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died,
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance
"And fell, as I have fallen by the way side,
Those soonest from whose forms most shadows past
And least of strength & beauty did abide."--
"Then, what is Life?" I said . . . the cripple cast
His eye upon the car which now had rolled
Onward, as if that look must be the last,
And answered "Happy those for whom the fold
Of ...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Two Spirits: An Allegory

FIRST SPIRIT

O thou, who plum'd with strong desire
Wouldst float above the earth, beware!
A Shadow tracks thy flight of fire--
Night is coming!
Bright are the regions of the air,
And among the winds and beams
It were delight to wander there--
Night is coming! SECOND SPIRIT
The deathless stars are bright above;
If I would cross the shade of night,
Within my heart is the lamp of love,
And that is day!
And the moon will smile with gentle light
On my golden plumes where'er they move;
The meteors will linger round my flight,
And make night day. FIRST SPIRIT

But if the whirlwinds of darkness waken
Hail, and lightning, and stormy rain;
See, the bounds of the air are shaken--
Night is coming!
The red swift clouds of the hurricane
Yon declining sun have overtaken,
The clash of the hail sweeps over the plain--
Night is coming! SECOND SPIRIT

I see the light, and I hear the sound;
I'll sail on the flood of the tempest dark,
With the calm within and the light around
Which makes night day:
And thou, when the gloom is deep and stark,
Look from thy dull earth, slumber-bound,
My moon-like flight thou then mayst mark
On high, far away.----

Some say there is a precipice
Where one vast pine is frozen to ruin
O'er piles of snow and chasms of ice
Mid Alpine mountains;
And that the languid storm pursuing
That winged shape, for ever flies
Round those hoar branches, aye renewing
Its airy fountains.

Some say when nights are dry and dear,
And the death-dews sleep on the morass,
Sweet whispers are heard by the traveller,
Which make night day:
And a silver shape like his early love doth pass
Upborne by her wild and glittering hair,
And when he awakes on the fragrant grass,

He finds night day.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Waning Moon

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky east,
A white and shapeless mass.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Witch Of Atlas

Before those cruel twins whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learn'd rhyme,
A Lady Witch there lived on Atlas mountain
Within a cavern by a secret fountain.

Her mother was one of the Atlantides.
The all-beholding Sun had ne'er beholden
In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden
In the warm shadow of her loveliness;
He kissed her with his beams, and made all golden
The chamber of gray rock in which she lay.
She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

'Tis said she first was changed into a vapor;
And then into a cloud,--such clouds as flit
(Like splendor-winged moths about a taper)
Round the red west when the Sun dies in it;
And then into a meteor, such as caper
On hill-tops when the Moon is in a fit;
Then into one of those mysterious stars
Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

Ten times the Mother of the Months had ben
Her bow beside the folding-star, and bidden
With that bright sign the billows to indent
The sea-deserted sand--(like children chidden,
At her command they ever came and went)--
Since in that cave a dewy splendor hidden
Took shape and motion. With the living form
Of this embodied Power the cave grew warm.

A lovely Lady garmented in light
From her own beauty: deep her eyes as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a temple's cloven roof; her hair
Dark; the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
Picturing her form. Her soft smiles shone afar;
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

And first the spotted cameleopard came;
And then the wise and fearless elephant;
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes interwolved. All gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame,--
They drank before her at her sacred fount;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,

Such gentleness and power even to behold.

The brinded lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death; the pard unstrung
His sinews at her feet, and sought to know,
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue,
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the Wood-gods in a crew,
Came blithe as in the olive-copses thick
Cicade are, drunk with the noonday dew;
And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,
Teazing the God to sing them something new;
Till in this cave they found the Lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

And universal Pan, 'tis said, was there.
And, though none saw him,--through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,
And through those living spirits like a want,--
He passed out of his everlasting lair
Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous Lady all alone,--
And she felt him upon her emerald throne.

And every Nymph of stream and spreading tree,
And every Shepherdess of Ocean's flocks
Who drives her white waves over the green sea,
And Ocean with the brine on his grey locks,
And quaint Priapus with his company,--
All came, much wondering how the enwombed rocks
Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth:
Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

The herdsmen and the mountain-maidens came,
And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant--
Their spirits shook within them, as a flame
Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt:
Pygmies and Polyphemes, by many a name,
Centaur and Satyr, and such shapes as haunt
Wet clefts,--and lumps neither alive nor dead,
Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed.

For she was beautiful. Her beauty made
The bright world dim, and everything beside
Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade.
No thought of living spirit could abide
(Which to her looks had ever been betrayed)

On any object in the world so wide,
On any hope within the circling skies,--
But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

Which when the Lady knew; she took her spindle,
And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and three
Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
The clouds and waves and mountains with, and she
As many starbeams, ere their lamps could dwindle
In the belated moon, wound skilfully;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove--
A shadow for the splendour of her love.

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures:--sounds of air
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of crystal silence there;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
will never die--yet, ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone
And the regret they leave remains alone.

And there lay Visions swift and sweet and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath like a chrysalis;--
Some eager to burst forth; some weak and faint
With the soft burden of intensest bliss
It is their work to bear to many a saint
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,
Even Love's; and others, white, green, grey, and black,
And of all shapes:--and each was at her beck.

And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipped in a floating net a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept.
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They beat their vans; and each was an adept--
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds--
To stir sweet thoughts or sad in destined minds.

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
Of glorious dreams--or, if eyes needs must weep,
Could make their tears all wonder and delight--
She in her crystal phials did closely keep:
If men could drink of those clear phials, 'tis said
The living were not envied of the dead.

Her cave was stored with scrolls of strange device,
The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price

Men from the Gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice,--
And which might quench the earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood, till men should live and move
Harmonious as the sacred stars above:--

And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of Wisdom's wizard skill;
Time, earth, and fire, the ocean and the wind,
And all their shapes, and man's imperial will;--
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of love--let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her Father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heaped in the recesses of her bower;
Carved lamps and chalices, and phials which shone
In their own golden beams--each like a flower
Out of whose depth a firefly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her own thoughts were each a minister,
Clothing themselves or with the ocean-foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind: such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads, and Naiads with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks,
And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the gnarled heart of stubborn oaks;
So they might live for ever in the light
Of her sweet presence--each a satellite.

"This may not be," the Wizard Maid replied.
"The fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair at length are drained and dried;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide;
The boundless ocean like a drop of dew
Will be consumed; the stubborn centre must
Be scattered like a cloud of summer dust.

"And ye, with them, will perish one by one.

If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay--oh ask not me
To love you till your little race is run;
I cannot die as ye must.--Over me
Your leaves shall glance--the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth; and so farewell."

She spoke and wept. The dark and azure well
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circlet where they fell
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light. A knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing forms, o'er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

All day the Wizard Lady sat aloof;
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof;
Or broidering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendor of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven--and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy:--

While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal-wood, rare gums, and cinnamon.
Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is;
Each flame of it is as a precious stone
Dissolved in ever-moving light, and this
Belongs to each and all who gaze thereon.'
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand.

This Lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain--as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glowed in her beauty's glance:
Through the green splendour of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fireflies--and withal did ever keep
The tenor of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet, and folded palm.

And, when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,
She passed at dewfall to a space extended,
Where, in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire, full even to the brim,
And overflowing all the margin trim:--

Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that innocuous liquor,
In many a mimic moon and bearded star,
O'er woods and lawns. The serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and, dreaming still, he crept afar.
And, when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn-leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

She had a boat which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardours in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to this daughter: from a car,
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

And others say that, when but three hours old,
The firstborn Love out of his cradle leapt,
And clove dun chaos with his wings of gold,
And, like a horticultural adept,
Stole a strange seed, and wrapped it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

The plant grew strong and green--the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power
To its own substance: woven tracery ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan,--
Of which Love scooped this boat, and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftness into it.
Couched on the fountain--like a panther tame
(One of the twain at Evan's feet that sit,
Or as on Vesta's sceptre a swift flame,
Or on blind Homer's heart a winged thought--
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love--all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow--
A living image which did far surpass

In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both.
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked;
The bosom lightly swelled with its full youth;
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipped with the speed of liquid lightnings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere.
She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored, and said "Sit here,"
And pointed to the prow, and took her seat
Beside the rudder with opposing feet.

And down the streams which clove those mountains vast,
Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests (whose shade cast
Darkness and odors, and a pleasure hid
In melancholy gloom) the pinnacle passed;
By many a star-surrounded pyramid
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

The silver noon into that winding dell,
With slanted gleam athwart the forest-tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell
When Earth over her face Night's mantle wraps;
Between the severed mountains lay on high,
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

And, ever as she went, the Image lay
With folded wings and unawakened eyes;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play
The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which with busy murmur vain
They has aroused from that full heart and brain.

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
Upon a stream of wind, the pinnacle went:
Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
The calm and darkness of the deep content

In which they paused; now o'er the shallow road
Of white and dancing waters, all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles:--mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

And down the earthquaking cataracts, which shivcr
Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear
A subterranean portal for the river,
It fled. The circling sunbows did upbear
Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

And, when the Wizard Lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many-winding vale
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend,
She called "Hermaphroditus!"--and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass

And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions;
With stars of fire spotting the stream below,
And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-winged minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow,
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime
With which frost paints the pines in winter-time.

And then it winnowed the elysian air
Which ever hung about that Lady bright,
With its etherial vans: and, speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight,
The pinnace, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

The water flashed,--like sunlight, by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to heaven;
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains; loosely driven,
The Lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro;
Beneath, the billows, having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,

The Lady Witch in visions could not chain
Her spirit; but sailed forth under the light
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
Its storm-outspeeding wings the Hermaphrodite;
She to the austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamondocana.

Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
Which rain could never bend or whirlblast shake,
With the antarctic constellations paven,
Canopus and his crew, lay the austral lake--
There she would build herself a windless haven
Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make
The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by:--

A haven beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably;
And around which the solid vapours hoar,
Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags, and, like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed-in with rifts and precipices grey,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

And, whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the wind's scourge foamed like a wounded thing
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightningflash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thunder-smoke--this haven
Was as a gem to copy heaven engraven.

On which that Lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star
(Even as a tiger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the antelopes which speediest are)
In her light boat; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water; till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden, and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits.
In mighty legions million after million
They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags; and many a proud pavilion
Of the intertexture of the atmosphere
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid
With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk. Cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aery dew
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sate, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon since they had brought
The last intelligence: and now she grew
Pale as that moon lost in the watery night,
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright.

These were tame pleasures.--She would often climb
The steepest ladder of the crudded rack
Up to some beaked cape of cloud sublime,
And like Arion on the dolphin's back
Ride singing through the shoreless air. Oft-time,
Following the serpent lightning's winding track,
She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
And laughed to hear the fireballs roar behind.

And sometimes to those streams of upper air
Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round
She would ascend, and win the Spirits there
To let her join their chorus. Mortals found
That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
Wandered upon the earth where'er she passed,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To glide adown old Nilus, where he threads
Egypt and Ethiopia from the steep
Of utmost Axume until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
His waters on the plain,--and crested heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid,
And many a vapour-belted pyramid:--

By Mīris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal-chamber floors,
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly alligators,
Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms;--within the brazen doors
Of the Great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast,

Tired with the pomp of their Osirian feast.

And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased, but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die,--
Through lotus-paven canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs and towers and fanes,--'twas her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night.

With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Passed through the peopled haunts of humankind,
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet,--
Through fane and palace-court, and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street
Under the Nile; through chambers high and deep
She passed, observing mortals in their sleep.

A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep.
Here lay two sister-twins in infancy;
There a lone youth who in his dreams did weep;
Within, two lovers linked innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem; and there lay calm
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song,--
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong,
And all the code of Custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young.
"This," said the Wizard Maiden, "is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life."

And little did the sight disturb her soul.
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake,
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
Our course unpiloted and starless make
O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal;
But she in the calm depths her way could take,
Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide
Beneath the weltering of the restless tide.

And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sunlike gems; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep,--all of one sort,
For all were educated to be so.

The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

And all the forms in which those spirits lay
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs who would conceal from us
Only their scorn of all concealment: they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

She all those human figures breathing there
Beheld as living spirits. To her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare,
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the inner form most bright and fair:
And then she had a charm of strange device,
Which, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

Alas! Aurora, what wouldst thou have given
For such a charm, when Tithon became grey--
Or how much, Venus, of thy silver heaven
Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
Had half (oh why not all?) the debt forgiven
Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay--
To any witch who would have taught you it
The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
Knew what love was, and felt itself alone.
But holy Dian could not chaster be
Before she stooped to kiss Endymion
Than now this Lady,--like a sexless bee,
Tasting all blossoms and confined to none:
Among those mortal forms the Wizard Maiden
Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

To those she saw most beautiful she gave
Strange panacea in a crystal bowl.
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforward as if some control,
Mightier than life, were in them; and the grave
Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was as a green and overarching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

For, on the night when they were buried, she
Restored the embalmer's ruining, and shook
The light out of the funeral-lamps, to be

A mimic day within that deathly nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling-bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch,

And there the body lay, age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying,
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,--
With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life; while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new the rapid, blind,
And fleeting generations of mankind.

And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and make
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desert is the serpent's wake
Which the sand covers. All his evil gain
The miser, in such dreams, would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap; the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray without a bribe.

The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphics into Greek,
How the God Apis really was a bull,
And nothing more; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple-doors, and pull
The old cant down: they licensed all to speak
Whate'er they thought of hawks and cats and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

The king would dress an ape up in his crown
And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
And on the right hand of the sunlike throne
Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat
The chatterings of the monkey. Every one
Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
Of their great emperor when the morning came;
And kissed--alas, how many kiss the same!

The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
Walked out of quarters in somnambulism;
Round the red anvils you might see them stand
Like Cyclopes in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
Beating their swords to ploughshares:--in a band
The jailors sent those of the liberal schism
Free through the streets of Memphis--much, I wis,
To the annoyance of king Amasis.

And timid lovers, who had been so coy

They hardly knew whether they loved or not,
Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
To the fulfilment of their inmost thought;
And, when next day the maiden and the boy
Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy--till the tenth moon shone;

And then the Witch would let them take no ill;
Of many thousand schemes which lovers find,
The Witch found one,--and so they took their fill
Of happiness in marriage warm and kind.
Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
Were torn apart (a wide wound, mind from mind)
She did unite again with visions clear
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

These were the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men. And what she did to Sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties,
To do her will, and show their subtle sleights,
I will declare another time; for it is
A tale more fit for the weird winter-nights
Than for these garish summer-days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Time

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality,
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore;
Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Time Long Past

Like the ghost of a dear friend dead
Is Time long past.
A tone which is now forever fled,
A hope which is now forever past,
A love so sweet it could not last,
Was Time long past.

There were sweet dreams in the night
Of Time long past:
And, was it sadness or delight,
Each day a shadow onward cast
Which made us wish it yet might last--
That Time long past.

There is regret, almost remorse,
For Time long past.
'Tis like a child's beloved corse
A father watches, till at last
Beauty is like remembrance, cast
From Time long past.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory -
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To ----

ONE word is too often profaned
For me to profane it;
One feeling too falsely disdain'd
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother;
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love:
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not,
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To A Lady, With A Guitar

Ariel to Miranda: -- Take
This slave of music, for the sake
Of him who is the slave of thee;
And teach it all the harmony
In which thou canst, and only thou,
Make the delighted spirit glow,
Till joy denies itself again
And, too intense, is turned to pain.
For by permission and command
Of thine own Prince Ferdinand,
Poor Ariel sends this silent token
Of more than ever can be spoken;
Your guardian spirit, Ariel, who
From life to life must still pursue
Your happiness, for thus alone
Can Ariel ever find his own.
From Prospero's enchanted cell,
As the mighty verses tell,
To the throne of Naples he
Lit you o'er the trackless sea,
Flitting on, your prow before,
Like a living meteor.
When you die, the silent Moon
In her interlunar swoon
Is not sadder in her cell
Than deserted Ariel.
When you live again on earth,
Like an unseen Star of birth
Ariel guides you o'er the sea
Of life from your nativity.
Many changes have been run
Since Ferdinand and you begun
Your course of love, and Ariel still
Has tracked your steps and served your will.
Now in humbler, happier lot,
This is all remembered not;
And now, alas! the poor sprite is
Imprisoned for some fault of his
In a body like a grave --
From you he only dares to crave,
For his service and his sorrow,
A smile today, a song tomorrow.

The artist who this idol wrought
To echo all harmonious thought,
Felled a tree, while on the steep
The woods were in their winter sleep,
Rocked in that repose divine
On the wind-swept Apennine;
And dreaming, some of Autumn past,
And some of Spring approaching fast,
And some of April buds and showers,

And some of songs in July bowers,
And all of love; and so this tree, --
O that such our death may be! --
Died in sleep, and felt no pain,
To live in happier form again:
From which, beneath Heaven's fairest star,
The artist wrought this loved Guitar;
And taught it justly to reply
To all who question skilfully
In language gentle as thine own;
Whispering in enamoured tone
Sweet oracles of woods and dells,
And summer winds in sylvan cells;
-- For it had learnt all harmonies
Of the plains and of the skies,
Of the forests and the mountains,
And the many-voiced fountains;
The clearest echoes of the hills,
The softest notes of falling rills,
The melodies of birds and bees,
The murmuring of summer seas,
And pattering rain, and breathing dew,
And airs of evening; and it knew
That seldom-heard mysterious sound
Which, driven on its diurnal round,
As it floats through boundless day,
Our world enkindles on its way:
-- All this it knows, but will not tell
To those who cannot question well
The Spirit that inhabits it;
It talks according to the wit
Of its companions; and no more
Is heard than has been felt before
By those who tempt it to betray
These secrets of an elder day.
But, sweetly as its answers will
Flatter hands of perfect skill,
It keeps its highest holiest tone
For one beloved Friend alone.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To A Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
 Bird thou never wert,
 That from Heaven, or near it,
 Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

 Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

 In the golden lightning
 Of the sunken sun
 O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
 Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

 The pale purple even
 Melts around thy flight;
 Like a star of Heaven
 In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight:

 Keen as are the arrows
 Of that silver sphere,
 Whose intense lamp narrows
 In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see--we feel that it is there.

 All the earth and air
 With thy voice is loud.
 As, when night is bare,
 From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

 What thou art we know not;
 What is most like thee?
 From rainbow clouds there flow not
 Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

 Like a poet hidden
 In the light of thought,
 Singing hymns unbidden,
 Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

 Like a high-born maiden
 In a palace tower,
 Soothing her love-laden
 Soul in secret hour

With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue

Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives

Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was

Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine

That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal
Or triumphal chaunt
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt--

A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?

What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:

Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,

Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:

Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Coleridge

Oh! there are spirits of the air,
And genii of the evening breeze,
And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
As star-beams among twilight trees:
Such lovely ministers to meet
Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
And moonlight seas, that are the voice
Of these inexplicable things,
Thou dost hold commune, and rejoice
When they did answer thee, but they
Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
Beams that were never meant for thine,
Another's wealth: tame sacrifice
To a fond faith ! still dost thou pine?
Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands?

Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
On the false earth's inconstancy?
Did thine own mind afford no scope
Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?
That natural scenes or human smiles
Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles?

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted;
The glory of the moon is dead;
Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed;
Thine own soul still is true to thee,
But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
Dream not to chase: the mad endeavour
Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Jane

The keen stars were twinkling
And the fair moon was rising among them,
 Dear Jane:
 The guitar was tinkling,
But the notes were not sweet till you sung them
 Again.
 As the moon's soft splendor
O'er the faint cold starlight of heaven
 Is thrown,
 So your voice most tender
To the strings without soul had then given
 Its own.

 The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later,
 Tonight;
 No leaf will be shaken
Whilst the dews of your melody scatter
 Delight.
 Though the sound overpowers,
Sing again, with your dear voice revealing
 A tone
 Of some world far from ours
Where music and moonlight and feeling
 Are one.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Night

Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
 Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear--
 Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
 Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand--
 Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
 I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
 I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
 Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?--And I replied,
 No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
 Soon, too soon--
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night--
Swift be thine approaching flight,
 Come soon, soon!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Men Of England

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed and clothe and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat -- nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow another reaps;
The wealth ye find another keeps;
The robes ye weave another wears;
The arms ye forge another bears.

Sow seed, -- but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth, -- let no imposter heap;
Weave robes, -- let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, in your defence to bear.

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plough and spade and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To the Moon

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth, -
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Wordsworth

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,--
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To..

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory -
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

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Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
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For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
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I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not,--

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

When The Lamp Is Shattered

When the lamp is shattered,
The light in the dust lies dead;
 When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is shed;
 When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
 When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

 As music and splendor
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
 The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute:--
 No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
 Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

 When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
 The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed.
 O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
 Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

 Its passions will rock thee,
As the storms rock the ravens on high;
 Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
 From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
 Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

Percy Bysshe Shelley